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HOME TIES

BY

ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS



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H O M E T I E S

A Rural Play in Four Acts

BY

ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS

Author of "FARM FOLKS," "THE HEART OF
A HERO," etc.



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Home Ties

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARTIN WINN	<i>With memories of the past</i>
LEONARD EVERETT	<i>A son of the soil</i>
HAROLD VINCENT	<i>From New York</i>
JOSIAH TIZZARD	<i>An umbrella mender</i>
RUTH WINN	<i>Martin's daughter</i>
ALMA WAYNE	<i>Her friend, from the city</i>
AUNT MELISSA	<i>Martin's sister</i>
MRS. POPLIN .	<i>A widow, with a pension and "symptoms"</i>
LINDY JANE	<i>Who "helps around"</i>

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—An afternoon in June, between five and six o'clock. The home-coming.

ACT II.—One month later. Visitors from the city.

ACT III.—An evening the next week. The party.

ACT IV.—The following January, six months having elapsed. The wedding announcement, and "Home, Sweet Home."

The action of the play takes place in the sitting-room of the Winn homestead, near a small village in the eastern part of New York State.

TIME OF PLAYING :—Two hours and a half.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

MARTIN WINN. A well-to-do "gentleman farmer," of the substantial, fairly educated type. By no means should he be depicted as of the "Rube" variety. Fifty-five to sixty years old, well set, and of a good-natured and sympathetic disposition. He should be neatly dressed, with the air of a prosperous country gentleman.

LEONARD EVERETT. A plain but rugged and good-looking country young man, of intelligence and fair education. Wholesome, manly and likeable. He wears a neat but ordinary working suit in first and second acts; in the third, "dress up" clothes, neat and in good taste; fourth act, dark winter suit, with overcoat and cap for entrance.

HAROLD VINCENT. A handsome, cultured young man, with the manners of a city bred person. Affable, and by no means "stuck up," but still showing that he has a good opinion of himself and feels somewhat above his surroundings, though not offensively so. In Act II, he wears a white flannel or tennis suit, with straw hat. In Act III, a light summer suit. He should be handsomely dressed and well groomed, but is not "dudish."

JOSIAH TIZZARD. A little old man, of the quaint humorous type, though not too much exaggerated. About sixty years old. Thin gray hair, chin whiskers, etc. In first two acts he wears a rather dilapidated pair of trousers, colored shirt and linen duster, with old straw hat, and carries a bundle of old umbrellas. Third act, best clothes, neater, but plain and cheap; paper or celluloid collar, gay necktie. Fourth act, cheap winter suit, with ulster, fur or cloth cap with ear-tabs, large tippet and heavy cloth mittens or knitted gloves.

RUTH WINN. A pretty, attractive country girl with a gloss of boarding-school and city manners, though entirely without affectation. About eighteen or nineteen years of age. For Act I, a well-made traveling dress of good material, with hat. Act II, light summer costume, with hat. Act III, handsome but not over elaborate summer evening gown. Act IV, plain house dress of dark material.

COSTUMES

ALMA WAYNE. About Ruth's age, but of a different type. She has more of elegance and a mild suggestion of aristocratic superiority, though not enough to be offensive. Of the rather gay, thoughtless coquettish type, but not a practiced flirt. In Act II, pretty, delicate summer costume or tennis suit, of the best material, with dainty hat. Act III, elegant summer evening gown, with flowers and possibly a few jewels. Just a bit overdressed in this act, as if to "show off," but still in good taste.

AUNT MELISSA. A lovable, sympathetic maiden lady of forty-five or thereabouts. Sweet, refined face, with hair plainly combed. She should under no circumstances be depicted as a comic "old maid." Plain house dress in first two acts; in Act III, neat dress of light material, with some adornment, but nothing out of good taste. Act IV, plain house dress.

MRS. POPLIN. A quaint comedy character. About sixty years of age, peevish, fussy and inquisitive; talks very fast. She is rather healthy in appearance, in spite of her constant rehearsals of her varied ailments, which plainly are of her own imagining. Act I, calico dress, with straw hat somewhat overtrimmed, parasol, etc. Act II, about the same. Act III, very gay costume of thin material, with ribbons, cheap jewelry, hair frizzed, etc. In this act she makes an attempt to play the "grand lady," with comical results. Act IV, winter dress, with wraps and hood.

LINDY JANE. Of the "Topsy" variety, twelve to fifteen years old, mischievous and full of fun. Acts I and II, short calico dress, white stockings, woolly wig. Act III, gay dress of cheap material, with short white apron, ribbons tied to pigtails. Act IV, similar to Act I. May be played "white" if preferred, by dropping the negro dialect.

PROPERTIES

Vases and a quantity of roses. Good-sized bottle, tied up in white paper. Glass of water. Bundle of old umbrellas. Traveling bags, etc. Letter, stamped, sealed and addressed. Tennis racquets. Family photograph album, with pictures. Small package. Large spoon. Newspapers, one loose and another rolled up and addressed. Wedding announcement in double envelopes, stamped, sealed and addressed. Work-basket. Salt and torn paper, for snow. Broom and dust-pan.

Home Ties

ACT I

SCENE.—*The sitting-room of a comfortable farmhouse, plainly but neatly furnished. There is a window, and also door in flat, both open, disclosing a glimpse of the yard, with trees, rose-bushes, and the fields beyond. It is between five and six o'clock on an afternoon in June. Discover LINDY JANE with a large bunch of roses, which she is arranging in vases on mantel, or shelf, R. Sofa, L.; table, with family photograph album, etc., R.*

(As curtain rises, AUNT MELISSA enters L.; goes and looks out of door in flat, toward R., anxiously.)

AUNT M. They're not in sight yet. Seems so they ought to be here by this time. It's after five o'clock, isn't it, Lindy Jane?

LINDY *(without looking round, working with flowers)*. Yass'm, 's aftah half-pas'. Ain' dem roses jes' scrumptious? Ah done picked 'n' picked.

AUNT M. Yes, they're very pretty. But I don't see what keeps 'em. *(Still looking off R.)*

LINDY. Watah. Ah al'ays gives 'em plenty o' watah.

AUNT M. No, no; I mean Martin, and Ruth. Just think, she's been gone over eight months—ever since the first of last September. Dear me, it seems eight years. I don't see 'em yet.

LINDY. La sakes, Miss Aunt M'lissy, don't worry. Dey's a-comin' bime-by. Got t' give 'em time t' drive way ovah from Harleyville. Mos' five miles.

AUNT M. Land, Lindy Jane, it isn't more'n three. Besides, the train gets in at a quarter of five, and—
Oh, here comes Mrs. Poplin. I declare, I don't feel like listening to any of her tales of woe.

HOME TIES

LINDY. Wondah what's got hold of 'er now. 'F one thing don' ail 'er, it's anothah. 'Tain't never nothin', with her. (*Stands back and looks at flowers, which she has finished.*) Dar, now, dey's all fixed. Guess Miss Roof's bound t' notice 'em, ain' she? Guess she'll know Ah's glad too 't she gwine come back fr'm dat ar board 'em school.

AUNT M. I'm going in the kitchen and see to that cake. You see if you can't get rid of Mrs. Poplin. And when you see them coming, you call me. (*Goes L.*)

LINDY. Yass'm, Ah will.

(*Exit AUNT M., L.*)

(LINDY stands admiring flowers, then glances out of door or window to L., as she gathers up a few stray rose leaves and petals which have fallen about. After a slight pause, MRS. POPLIN drags herself in, pausing at door. She puts on a plaintive expression and appears to be nearly overcome.)

MRS. P. Oh, you there, Lindy Jane? Do give me a chair, please. I'm jest about tuckered out. Seemed so I never would git this far, I'm so weak; but I jest had t' go down to the store 'n' git some o' that new medicine. (*LINDY has placed rocking-chair L. C.; MRS. P. goes and sinks into it.*) I feel sure it's jest what I need. Thank you, Lindy Jane. I wonder if you'd get me a drink o' water; I do feel so weak.

LINDY. Suah 'nough Ah will, Mis' Poplin. What ailin' y' now?

MRS. P. (*half-weeping*). Oh, dear, Lindy Jane, I d' know, but it's somethin' terrible, I know it is. I do have sech awful spells. I'm afraid it's a tumor. I read an advertisement about this medicine (*showing good-sized bottle, wrapped up, which she carries*) and it described my sym'toms exactly. I could jest feel 'em, every one, as I read what it said. Yes, I'm afraid it's a tumor; I'm almost sure it is. 'N' it'll carry me off, I know it will. I can't stand much more.

LINDY. Land, but yo' don' look so turr'ble awful bad. Seems t' me mebbe yo' got th' 'maginin's.

MRS. P. The what? I never heard o' them. How do they affect you?

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LINDY. Don' 'fect me nohow. Ah never had 'em. Ah mean, Ah reckon mebbe yo' ain't got things—yo' jes' 'maginein' 'em.

MRS. P. Oh, that's it? Well, I guess I don't, anything of the sort. I'm sick, if anybuddy ever was. It's all I can do to keep up. I guess when I'm dead and in my grave—— (*Covers face with hand and snivels.*)

LINDY (*chuckling to herself, slyly*). Lan', Mis' Poplin, Ah didn' mean nuffin. Guess Ah'd bettah git yo' dat watah.

(*Exit L., grinning.*)

(*As soon as alone, MRS. P. visibly brightens up, though still retaining her dejected look; glances curiously about, then resumes her former attitude as, after a pause, LINDY reënters with a glass of water.*)

MRS. P. Thanks, Lindy Jane. You'll have your reward in heaven.

(*Takes water and drinks two or three swallows.*)

LINDY. La, Ah d' want no rewahd. Watah ain' nuffin. Feel bettah now?

MRS. P. (*handing her the glass*). Some, thank you, but I do have sech terrible sinking spells. (*Resignedly.*) Some day I'll pass away in one of 'em. But the Lord's will be done. (*Rocks disconsolately a moment, then seems to forget herself.*) Expectin' Ruth home t'-day, ain't they?

LINDY. Yass'm. Mr. Winn's done druv over t' Harleyville, whar de train comes in at, t' meet 'er. Mos' time dey's yuh, raight now. (*Looks out of door to R.*) 'Spect 'm ev' minute.

MRS. P. I s'pose Ruth'll be too big for her shoes when she gets back, bein' t' boardin'-school 'n' learnin' all them fancy branches they tell about. Been visitin' in New York, too, I hear.

LINDY. She won't be no diff'unt, 's mah 'pinion. Ain't no stuck-up-ness 'bout Miss Roof, 's Ah ev' see.

MRS. P. Wal, of course, I ain't sayin' they is, but it don't take much t' spile young folks now-days, once they git notions. Time was when Ruth Winn was like

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any country gal, 'n' was glad enough t' let Len Everett take her 'round, till folks thought they was go'n' t' make a match of it. But I guess she's lookin' higher, sence she's been t' New York and met a lot o' them, doods.

LINDY. Huh! Doods. What's them?

MRS. P. Dressed-up scarecrows, I call 'em, with store clothes on, 'n' smokin' cigarettes. Ever seen one?

LINDY. Yass'm. Come from the city, don't they, 'n' board?

MRS. P. That's them. In the summer time.

LINDY. Yass'm. But Ah don't cal'late Miss Roof's gwine have nuffin t' do with none o' dem. (*Enter AUNT M., L.*) Does yo', Miss Aunt M'lissy?

AUNT M. What's that? Oh, good-afternoon, Mis' Poplin.

MRS. P. Good-afternoon, Miss Winn. I jest stopped in on m' way home from the drug store after some new medicine.

AUNT M. What's your affliction jest now?

LINDY. Doods!

AUNT M. Land, what you talkin' about? I guess Mis' Poplin ain't takin' medicine f'r dudes.

LINDY. No, 'm. Dem's what she say Miss Roof's been whar dey is, 'n' laks 'em.

MRS. P. I didn't say no sech thing. Don't you pay no 'tention t' her, Miss Winn. What I said was——

AUNT M. Lindy, you go 'n the kitchen and wash up those cake tins, and if you see them comin' you let me know.

LINDY (*mischievously, going L.*). See the cake tins comin'?

AUNT M. No, of course not, you silly thing. Martin and Ruth. They ought to have been here long ago.

LINDY (*L., giggling*). He! he! Doods!

MRS. P. (*rising*). Wal, I must be gett'n' along. I had t' stop 'n' rest a few minutes, I'm that weak. That last medicine didn't do me a bit o' good.

AUNT M. Let me see, that was for—what was it you had last week?

MRS. P. Wal, I thought it was liver complaint, but it seems it wasn't. I was sure I had the symptoms it told about on the wrapper, but you never can tell. No, it was worse'n that. I've got a tumor. (*Sinks into chair.*)

AUNT M. You don't say! When did that come on you?

MRS. P. Oh, I s'pose that's what's been ailin' me all along,

only I didn't know it. Mebbe I'd never 'a' really known, only I happened t' read an advertisement about this medicine (*holding up bottle*) and it jest described my sym'toms. I'm afraid I ain't long for this world. (*Resignedly, with a deep sigh.*) Wal, I hope they's peace in the next.

AUNT M. I wouldn't give up yet a while. There's a lot a things you haven't had yet.

MRS. P. Oh, Miss Winn, don't make fun of me. It ain't no jokin' matter. I suffer somethin' terrible, 'n' you can't imagine how much it costs for medicine. This cost ninety-six cents. (*AUNT M. has gone to door, is looking anxiously off to R.*) So you're expectin' Ruth home, are y'?

AUNT M. Yes; Martin drove over to Harleyville to meet her, and I'm expecting 'em every minute. Just think, she's been gone the best part of a year.

MRS. P. Yes; I hear she's been visitin' in New York 'n' goin' to operys 'n' things. I s'pose she'll be terrible hifalutin when she gets back, 'n' won't hardly speak t' common folks.

AUNT M. (*turning to her*). How can you talk that way, Mrs. Poplin? You know Ruth isn't that kind, and you've no call t' say such things. Ruth Winn'll never snub her old friends, no matter what comes to her. I hope she's been better brought up than that.

MRS. P. Land, I hope you ain't mad, Miss Winn. I didn't mean nothin'. Of course, I know you've been a mother to her, and an own mother couldn't 'a' done no better. I was jest a-thinkin', what with board'n'-school, 'n' New York s'ciety, 'n' all that —

AUNT M. You needn't have worried. I've had her ever since her mother died, when she wasn't a year old, and she don't know any difference.

MRS. P. Her mother died away, didn't she? New York, wa'n't it? (*AUNT M. turns again to the door; doesn't answer.*) Wal, I ain't tryin' t' pry int' things—that ain't me; but I never could understand why you al'ays made sech a mystery about it, if they wa'n't nothin' y' want t' hide. Everybuddy knew your brother went away from home 'n' got married, 'n' never was seen here agin till he come home a year or so after, sayin' his wife was dead 'n' bringin' the baby f'r you t' bring

up. You never explained anything more, so of course—wal, folks kind o' wondered. (*Partly rises.*) Wal, I guess I'd better be goin'. I s'pose you'd ruther not have anybuddy here when Ruth comes. (*Sinks back into chair.*) Oh, dear, dear me! I do feel that weak, I d' know's you'll be bothered with me much longer, Miss Winn. I may never be able t' git this fur from home agin, till I'm carried to m' grave.

AUNT M. I guess I wouldn't talk that way. You've lived through a good many things, 'n' I guess you'll live through a good many more. (*Looks off to L.*) Here comes a friend of yours—an admirer, I might say.

MRS. P. Who is it?

AUNT M. Mr. Tizzard.

MRS. P. Josiah Tizzard? F'r the land sake, seems so I can't get anywhere I don't meet that man. He tags me around somethin' scandalous.

AUNT M. Does he? I s'pose the best way to get rid of him would be to marry him and done with it.

MRS. P. Miss Winn—how you talk! I don't flatter m'self it's me he's after. He didn't seem quite s' anxious till the gov'ment give me that pension of twenty-four dollars a month, 'n' six hunderd back.

AUNT M. Well, you know rich widows like you ain't so plenty, and besides, I don't know but that Josiah's quite a match.

MRS. P. What—him? Nothin' but an umbrella mender? Huh!

AUNT M. Seems to me, between your money and his umbrellas, you'd be sure to have something laid by for a rainy day.

(AUNT M. has crossed down to L. C.; MRS. P. does not reply, but gives a sniff of disdain. All of a sudden JOSIAH TIZZARD pokes his head in door or window.)

JOSIAH. Umbrellas t' mend?

AUNT M. No, Mr. Tizzard, not t'-day. But won't you come in?

JOSIAH. No, thanks—can't. Got t' jog along. (*Sees MRS. P. for the first time.*) Wal—I d' know, mebbe I will.

MRS. P. (*grunting scornfully*). H'm!—the idee.

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AUNT M. Yes, do. (*Places a chair R. C.*)

(*Enter JOSIAH, D. F., from L., pausing up C.*)

JOSIAH (*as AUNT M. motions to chair*). Thanks, guess I will. (*To MRS. P.*) How d' do, Mari'? (*MRS. P. glares at him savagely, then turns her head away.*) How y' feelin'?

AUNT M. She says she isn't very well. She's got "symptoms."

JOSIAH. That so, Mari'? What kind? I was readin' 'bout some new ones; was comin' over. Thought you might like t' try 'em.

MRS. P. (*rising*). You c'n set there makin' fun of me, 'f you want t', but it won't do you no good. I sh'd think anybuddy 's bad off as I be deserved pity, 'nstid o' bein' made fun of. You needn't bother y'rself about comin' t' see me, Josiah Tizzard, n'r callin' me by m' first name, nether. That's reserved f'r them closer t' me 'n you be. (*Up C.*)

JOSIAH (*rising, going toward her*). I'll git closer, 'f y' say so.

MRS. P. (*drawing away*). I guess you needn't. When I want y', I'll ask y'.

JOSIAH. 'S that so? Wal, now, I thought the men was 'xpected t' do the pr'posin'. But anyway, so 't's done.

(*AUNT M. is up C., looking off; MRS. P. and JOSIAH L. C. At this point, AUNT M. becomes excited.*)

AUNT M. Here they come! They're comin'! (*Calls off L.*) Lindy—Lindy Jane, here they come!

(*AUNT M. rushes off to R.; LINDY runs in L. and follows her, without looking at MRS. P. or JOSIAH.*)

JOSIAH. What is it? Who's come?

MRS. P. Land, sech a fuss, you might think it was the queen. It's Ruth Winn, back fr'm board'n'-school, 'n' visitin' in New York.

(*They go up and look off; she stands in door, JOSIAH is close to her and lets his arm gradually steal about her waist. She does not appear to notice.*)

JOSIAH. Oh! Ruth, is it? Home again?

MRS. P. Yes. There she is—see her?—wavin' her hand. Land, look at that hat.

JOSIAH. Stylish lookin', ain't she?

MRS. P. Huh! Fussed up, I call it. Don't look much like a farmer's daughter. (*Notices his arm, gets away from him.*) Josiah Tizzard, what you doin'? How dast you?

JOSIAH. Thought I'd embrace the opp'rtnuity.

MRS. P. Oh, I'm an opp'rtnuity, be I? 'N' you don't b'lieve in wastin' any, do y'?

JOSIAH. Waistin' one then, wasn't I? (*Chuckles.*) Eh?

MRS. P. Oh,—h'm!—think you're smart, don't y'? (*Looks off.*) Now, f'r goodness sake, b'have y'self, 'f y' know how. Here they come. I s'pose she'll be 's stuck-up 's ever was.

JOSIAH. Think so? Oh, I d' know. Never seemed t' me Ruth Winn was that kind o' gal.

(*Again sidling up to her.*)

MRS. P. Wal, y' never can tell. (*Notices him and gives him a push.*) Josiah Tizzard, you behave y'rself. Ain't you got no sense?

(*He tumbles over, against chair or table. She disdains him, going to C. D. There is a sound of greetings, laughter, etc., off R. After a slight pause RUTH WINN enters C. D. from R., with AUNT M., who has an arm about her. They are animated. LINDY follows, with hand-bag, umbrella, etc.*)

RUTH. Home again—oh, to think of it, I'm home again—where you are, Auntie, dear, and with father—yes, and you too, Lindy Jane. I'm so glad to see you all, I don't know how to act. (*Sees MRS. P.*) Oh, and there's Mrs. Poplin, too! (*Goes and shakes hands with MRS. P., cordially.*) How are you, Mrs. Poplin? Well, I hope? And Mr. Tizzard!

(*Shakes hands with him.*)

MRS. P. No, Ruth, I don't think it'll ever fall to my lot t' be well agin. I'm very poorly —

RUTH. I'm so sorry. I remember when I went away you thought you had—m'm—let me see—was it pleurisy?

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MRS. P. I don't quite remember, but I think I did have the sym'toms —

AUNT M. Mis' Poplin always has symptoms, Ruth. My, but you're looking well.

RUTH. Of course I am. And now that I am back in this pure country air—why, I shall eat you out of house and home. You'd better replenish the larder, Lindy Jane.

LINDY (L.). Yass'm, Missy Roof, we's got plenty o' lard.

RUTH (*who is looking about, now goes up and sees the roses, smelling them*). Oh, what a lot of beautiful roses—giving me such a sweet welcome. Auntie, dear, did you fix them?

AUNT M. No, it was Lindy Jane.

RUTH. Lindy, you're a dear. They are just beautiful, and so prettily arranged.

LINDY (*immensely pleased*). La, Missy, do y' t'ink so? He! he! (*Exit L., chuckling gleefully.*)

(MRS. P. *has reseated herself* L. C. AUNT M. *is* R.; RUTH *looking at roses.*)

MRS. P. I s'pose you've been havin' a grand time, what with your learnin' s' much, 'n' goin' to all them op'rys and things? I heard you was visitin' in New York.

RUTH (*still up stage*). Oh, yes; I was there nearly three weeks, and had the best time. But I'm glad to get home, for all that. "I love the dear old farm," as the song says.

JOSIAH. Met lots of fine folks, I dare say. Probably got a new beau.

RUTH. Oh, Mr. Tizzard!

AUNT M. I guess she's been too busy to think about beaux, and got too much sense.

(RUTH, *showing some confusion, turns to* R. MRS. P. *has again risen and gone to* C. JOSIAH *follows her.*)

MRS. P. Land, Josiah Tizzard, seems t' me your mind don't run t' nothin' but love makin'. (*He makes a motion to take her arm; she jerks away from him.*) B'have y'rself. Wal, I really must be goin'. I didn't mean t' stay s' long, only I felt that weak I had t' have a rest. (*Goes up, followed by* JOSIAH.) Good-bye,

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RUTH. I hope you'll come over 'n' see me—soon—'cause if y' wait very long I may not be there.

RUTH (*turning to her*). Why, Mrs. Poplin, are you going away?

MRS. P. Wal, they's no tellin'. (*Dolefully.*) I may take a long journey.

AUNT M. Where you think you're goin'?

MRS. P. (*folding her hands and rolling up her eyes, solemnly*). I hope I've lived so it'll be to a better land, where they ain't no sorrow 'r sickness.

JOSIAH. Not even sym'toms?

(*MRS. P. gives him a withering look; AUNT M. smiles to herself, turning away; RUTH pretends to take it all seriously.*)

RUTH. Why, Mrs. Poplin, I hope it isn't as bad as that?

MRS. P. Wal, y' never can tell, but my sym'toms are terrible bad. (*Going.*) Good-day, Miss Winn. You come over too, when y' git time.

AUNT M. Thanks, Mis' Poplin, I will.

JOSIAH (*having taken his hat and umbrellas, sticks close to MRS. P.*). I'm a-goin' right your way, Mari'.

MRS. P. (*drawing back, looking at him with disdain over her shoulder, as she goes to D. F.*). Oh, you be? Wal, y' needn't put y'rself out. H'm!

(*She tosses her head, marches off to R., ignoring him. He follows, looking back with a sly wink at AUNT M., jerking his head sideways toward MRS. P., as he follows her. RUTH goes up and looks after them, laughing; AUNT M. is L. C.*)

RUTH. Aren't they funny? Do you think she will ever have him?

AUNT M. Wouldn't be surprised. I take it he's one of the "symptoms" that she can't get rid of.

RUTH (*coming down*). Poor Mrs. Poplin, with her "symptoms."

AUNT M. Well, I'm glad they're gone. Now maybe we can get a chance to talk a little ourselves. Come and sit down, Ruthie dear, and let me have a good look at you. (*She sits on sofa, RUTH beside her.*) Yes, you are my own little girl still (*looking in her face search-*

ingly), the same—and yet, seems to me—isn't there something in your eyes that wasn't there before? I don't know just what—only——

RUTH (*laughing, a bit uneasily*). Why, Aunt Melissa, what do you mean? I don't see how they could be any different—only happier, perhaps, after such a winter, and—getting home again—and——

AUNT M. M'm—no, it isn't only that. Ruthie, dear, haven't I been the same as a mother to you?

RUTH. Why, of course you have, you dear, sweet soul; no girl ever had a better mother than you have been to me.

AUNT M. Then tell me all a girl would tell her mother. Don't you think you ought to do that?

RUTH. Of course, and I—I always have, and—will—only, I just got here, and there has not been much opportunity, you know. I have so much to tell that I don't know where to begin.

AUNT M. (*rising, going to mantel and getting letter*). This came for you, dear, to-day.

RUTH (*taking letter, with a sudden flash of joy, which she cannot conceal*). Oh! Thank you.

AUNT M. You never used to get such letters, Ruthie—in a man's handwriting, too. And from New York.

RUTH (*looking at letter*). N-no, of course not; I hadn't been away, then, and made new friends, and—— (*Suddenly very serious, goes to AUNT M., putting her arms about her.*) Auntie, you don't think I have done anything wrong, do you—or that I could?

AUNT M. No, of course I don't, but I don't want you t' get too high notions, dear, and so wrapped up in city folks and their ways that you can't be contented here any more. If you do, I'll be sorry we ever let you go away and have what they call "advantages." But there, we won't talk about it now. You just got home, and, as Mis' Poplin says, "don't hail trouble when we see it going by and ask it to stop in." (*Goes up c.*)

RUTH (*putting letter back in envelope*). But you frighten me. Trouble—as if I—oh, Auntie, tell me—do you really think I could change like that, or——?

AUNT M. Goodness me, no; I'm so excited, with your coming back, and all, that I don't know what I say. (*Looks off.*) Here comes your father. I must go out and see if Lindy Jane hasn't most got supper ready.

HOME TIES

(AUNT M. goes L. RUTH goes to D. F., meets MARTIN WINN, who enters from R.)

MARTIN (*taking RUTH in his arms*). Here we are—my little girl and I, home again, and I feel—I feel as if I could never let her go away again, now I've got her back.

RUTH. Now, you dear old daddy, don't you begin to think about anything like that. Why, I've just got home, and—and I'm not going away again for a long, long time.

(*She drops the letter. MARTIN picks it up.*)

MARTIN (*glancing at letter*). My, getting letters already—from New York, too. Who's it from?

RUTH. Why, from—a friend of mine.

MARTIN. In New York?

RUTH. Yes.

MARTIN. Thought you just left there? Seems so they're mighty quick about writing to you. Didn't waste any time. Found it waiting here, didn't you?

RUTH. Why, yes, father, he ——— (*Pauses, confused.*)

MARTIN. Oh, it's a "he"! Who is it?

RUTH. Mr. Vincent, father. I'm sure you'd like him.

MARTIN. How long have you known him?

RUTH. Why, I met him first last December when I went home with Alma Wayne for the Christmas holidays. She's my roommate, you know, and she knows him. He's a gentleman, father—and so handsome, and polished. I am sure you will like him.

MARTIN. Oh, I will? Then I'm likely to see him?

RUTH. Some time, perhaps. Oh, father, he is so handsome, and so refined, and—I—I——

MARTIN. Look here, little one, do you mean you're in love?

RUTH. Oh, father!

MARTIN. This is no time to hide things, little girl. The world is big, and there's all sorts o' people in it. You've been out into it; not far, nor to see much,—but I take it two weeks in New York is equal to a lifetime in a place like this, when it comes to finding out what the world's like, and what kind of folks there is

in it. I'm afraid—I'm afraid my little girl has begun to find out.

RUTH. Why, father, how you talk! I'm sure it was a great advantage to spend two or three weeks in New York, to see and hear so much, and to meet such people. Alma Wayne's father is rich, and they have elegant friends.

MARTIN. Elegant friends are not always the best nor the safest for a little girl from the country to know. (*Takes hold of her shoulders gently, and turns her to him, looking into her face.*) Ruth, tell me—tell your old daddy—did that man make love to you? (*She drops her eyes, blushing.*) And you let him—you told him—

(*Pauses, but looks straight at her, lifting her face to his, and waiting for an answer.*)

RUTH. Yes—yes, I told him I love him, for I do—I do! Oh, father, how could I help it? He is so grand, so noble. I know he is, father, I know it, and—he—he is coming here soon—to see me—to see you, and —

(*Buries her face against his arm, weeping.*)

MARTIN. There, there, little one, don't let's feel this way about it. I'm sorry, because I—I know—I know what comes from things like this, and I hadn't ought to let you go away, but I wanted you to be educated and I hoped—oh, well, we won't worry. I'll see him, and maybe—maybe—it'll come out all right.

RUTH (*looking up, hopefully*). Yes, yes, father, it will; I know it will. When you see him, and know him, I am sure you will have no more fear.

MARTIN. All right. Now you run along and get fixed up a little for supper, because it's 'most ready, and—I 'most f'rgot, there's somebuddy out there waiting to see you.

RUTH (*she has started R., now pauses, turning*). To see me? Who?

MARTIN. Why, an old friend of yours—Len Everett.

RUTH. Leonard Everett—oh, yes—Len. (*Goes up to c.*) Is he out there—waiting all this time? Why didn't you bring him in?

MARTIN. He wouldn't come. Bashful, I guess. Said for

me to find out, and I'm blessed if I didn't forget. Bet he's chafing like an old horse in fly time.

RUTH. Well, I don't wonder. You call him in, while I go and tidy up, and tell him I'll be right down. I shall be very glad to see Len again. (R.)

MARTIN (*looking out c., then at her, speaking just as she is about to exit R.*). Ruth.

RUTH (*turning, in door*). Yes, father.

MARTIN. What—about—him?

RUTH. About—him? Leonard Everett?

MARTIN. Yes—Leonard Everett. Do you think it'll be treating him just right? You know, before you went away—well, it was sort of understood——

RUTH (*coming part way back to c.*). I—I know. But there was nothing definite—nothing ever said that should make him think he had a claim on me.

MARTIN. He thinks he has. He's built a new house—he's planned, and thought—I'm afraid it's going to go pretty hard with Len.

RUTH. Oh, I'm so sorry. I like him—I—but I couldn't have Len; I don't love him, not that way, and I never told him so. He has no right to think I am treating him badly.

(*She exits hurriedly, R. MARTIN looks after her, shaking his head sadly; goes and looks off to R., beckoning with his hand, just as AUNT M. enters L.*)

AUNT M. Land sakes, Martin, are you never coming to supper? It's been ready for ten or fifteen minutes. Where's Ruth?

MARTIN (*without looking around*). Gone to tidy up a bit. (*Motions off.*)

AUNT M. Who you motioning to?

MARTIN. Len Everett. He's waiting to come in. But she says she don't want to see him. Melissy, we made a mistake. It's all happened, just as we might have known it would. It's got into her brain, just as it did her mother's.

AUNT M. Oh, Martin! No!

MARTIN. Yes, it has. She's seen it—the city—the great, gay city, with its lights and its consuming fires. There it is—waiting—calling—ready to dazzle their eyes and turn their brains, and lure them on to destruction. It

wants our sons, our daughters, our little ones—to devour—the way a wolf wants a lamb to devour it!

AUNT M. Oh, Martin—don't talk that way—don't! It hasn't got our Ruth. She's safe. We've got her back here with us, now, and we'll keep her. She's safe here—with us—Martin. We'll keep her, we won't let her go away again, and she'll forget. She'll forget, Martin, in a little while.

MARTIN. Her mother didn't forget. They won't let her. They'll come here and take her away. He's coming—she said so. Oh, why didn't I keep her here, and not let her go away? I might have known—I might have known!

(*He sinks into chair by table, sadly.* LEONARD EVERETT
appears in C. D.)

AUNT M. Here's Len, Martin—Leonard Everett. Come in, Len.

LEN. (*coming part way down C.*). Thanks, Miss Winn. I saw you wave to me, Mr. Winn, so I came along. I—I thought Ruth was here. (*Looks around.*)

MARTIN (*without turning, his chin resting on hand, arm on table*). She was, a minute ago. She went up-stairs.

AUNT M. Set down, Len. She'll be right down, I guess. We're just going to have supper, and I want you to stay and eat with us. (L.)

LEN. Oh, no, thank you, Miss Winn; I'll come over again. I just wanted to see Ruth a few minutes, and welcome her home. I won't stay this time.

LINDY (*putting head in L.*). Suppah's ready. (*Disappears.*)

AUNT M. Pshaw! I guess you will. I'm going to put on another plate.

(*Exit, L.*)

MARTIN (*rising*). Sit down, Len. You might's well stay.

LEN. Well, you see, I'm afraid it would seem like intruding. I don't think you want strangers when you have a family reunion.

MARTIN. I guess you're not a stranger, Len—here.

LEN. No, of course not—that way. But—well, what about Ruth? Do you think she'd want me? You see, Mr. Winn, I've got a kind of a—well, a queer feeling—as

if maybe Ruth won't feel toward me the same as she used to. She only wrote to me two or three times all last winter, and the last letter, soon after Christmas, wasn't just the kind a fellow expects from the girl he—to tell the truth, I've felt ever since as if I was going to lose the one thing in all this world I want most. Am I, Mr. Winn—am I?

MARTIN. That's for you to find out, Len. What you want most in all the world is worth fighting for, seems to me, and as long's there's a fighting chance, I wouldn't give her up, boy.

LEN. Then you think—— (*Takes his hat from chair, goes up.*) I see. You don't need to tell me. She's met somebody else. Well, what else could I expect? It was only natural. (*In C. D., not noticing RUTH, who appears R., and stands looking at him.*) Tell her I was asking for her, that I—— (*Sees RUTH.*) Oh! I—— (*Turns, about to go out.*)

RUTH (*entering, going up to C.*). Len—why, Len—aren't you going to speak to me? (*He pauses, turns, looking at her. She holds out her hand.*) Aren't you glad to see me?

LEN. Why, of course I am. (*Takes her hand, shakes it warmly.*) Glad? I should say so. It's like seeing the sun come out again, after days of darkness. Ruth—— (*He forgets himself, bends toward her. She draws away from him, kindly, but in a way that he understands. He straightens up.*) Oh, excuse me, I—I must be going now.

MARTIN. You'd better stay to supper, Len.

RUTH. Why, yes, Len, of course—stay.

LEN. I—I don't think I can, very well, I——

(MARTIN quietly exits, L.)

RUTH. Wouldn't you stay to please me?

LEN. If I thought it would—yes, of course. Do you really want me to?

RUTH. Why, of course I do. We are old friends, Len, and I'm very glad to see you again. I've been gone a long time.

LEN. A long time? It's been ages to me. I've counted the weeks, the days, almost the minutes, till it was time

for you to come home, and now—well, it isn't much as I expected it was going to be.

RUTH. I don't know what you expected, Len, but if—if it was more than—than the best of friendship, I'm—I'm sorry—but you had no right to expect more than that.

LEN. No right, Ruth? You tell me that, after all the years I've thought something else, and you've let me? Why, ever since I was a little boy, and you was a tiny bit of a girl, I've thought of you, and never of any other girl. It was always you, when we walked to school together and I carried your books and your dinner pail; it was you when we began to go to parties, and you always let me take you home—or from church—and seemed glad to have me. Didn't I talk about the time you would be my wife, and ——

RUTH. Len—no!—it never came to that ——

LEN. And when I began to earn money, and save all I could, it was for you. Then I grew up, and got along, and saved more, and got enough to build a house—a home—and last fall as soon as you went away, I began to build it, to surprise you, and now it's done, and—and you—oh, Ruth, you don't mean it! You don't mean that you won't have me—that you have found somebody else away off there where you have been—in the city—that you don't love me—and won't ——

(He pauses, looking at her pleadingly; she stands with drooping head. There is a slight pause, as he waits for an answer, then holds out his arms, as if about to take her into them. She draws away, gently, but meaningly, looking up at him, with a sad, wistful face.)

RUTH. Oh, Len, I am so sorry if—if you have misunderstood—if you think I ever meant anything more than friendship. I like you—I always have, and always will, as one of the best friends I ever had—as a brother—but—oh, Len, I'm sorry you feel so about it, but it can't—it can't be—anything more.

LEN. You mean, Ruth? You mean ——

RUTH. Yes, Len.

(She bows her head, he looks at her a moment, as if scarcely

comprehending the truth of her words, then, with an expression, not of anger, but of sadness and resignation, turns and goes slowly off to L., without looking back. RUTH starts, as if to call him back, but pauses, and after looking after him, in a dejected manner, brightens, takes letter from her pocket, opens it, reads a moment, flushed with happiness, then, rapturously kissing the signature, goes slowly toward L., as the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Same as Act I, the middle of an afternoon one month later. ALMA WAYNE, wearing a handsome summer costume, with hat, is discovered seated on the arm of a chair, L. C., smilingly regarding HAROLD VINCENT, who, in a jaunty tennis or outing suit, with straw hat in one hand and tennis racquet in the other, stands C.*

ALMA. Yes, I certainly am puzzled this time, Harold Vincent. As a rule, I can read you like an open book, but I must admit I don't see why you are hanging around here. What's your little game this time?

HAROLD. Game? I don't know what you mean. There's no "game" about it. Aren't you here? I might ask what your game is.

ALMA. Why, I'm here visiting Ruth Winn. She asked me to come for a couple of weeks or so, and I thought I'd see what real "rural felicity" is like. And lo and behold, when I arrive, here you are, Johnny-on-the-spot. If I didn't know better, and you hadn't arrived first, I might think you were following me. As it is, well, there's but one conclusion—it's the little country maid. Have I struck it?

HAROLD. Of course you have, and you know it. You knew last winter, at your house, that I was in love with her. I told you so.

ALMA. Oh, fudge! I've seen you "in love," as you call it, with too many. It was I, once. You have the most elastic heart I ever saw.

HAROLD (*throwing hat on table or chair*). See here, Alma, I don't want you to interfere. If you go and spoil it, I'll never forgive you. I know, I've had fancies for plenty of girls, gay city flirts who were no more serious than I was, but Ruth Winn isn't that kind. She has made me realize what real love is. I think I have a chance, and I mean to win —

ALMA. Win Winn?

HAROLD (*taking his hat, and starting to go out c.*). You may joke all you please, but I'm in earnest.

ALMA. All right. Then I'll help you—or at least, I won't hinder you, if you mean the right thing. But your past record with girls is none too much in your favor, and when it comes to a sweet, innocent, unsuspecting young thing like Ruth Winn—well, none of your chorus girl tactics with her, that's all.

HAROLD (*laughing lightly*). I don't know as you are just the one to set yourself up as a model of constancy. I've known you to flirt, and—what about that stalwart village swain, Mr. Everett? I've seen you casting a few alluring smiles in his direction, the last day or so.

ALMA. Poor fellow, he needs them. And while you're talking about him, let me tell you something. If you aren't mighty careful, you'll have him to reckon with.

HAROLD. Oh,—him!

ALMA. Yes—him! Be careful, that's all, and remember—
“a word to the wise ——”

(*He is in D. F., she L. C. Enter LINDY, L.*)

LINDY. Oh, 'scuse me. (*Regarding ALMA with great admiration.*) Ah was look'n' fo' Miss Aunt M'lissy, 'n' didn' know yo'-all was yuh.

ALMA. I think she went to the village. (*With mock politeness.*) This is Mr. Vincent, Miss Lindy Jane.

HAROLD (*smiling condescendingly*). How do you do, Miss Lindy Jane? Glad to meet you.

LINDY. Is y'? Thanks. (*To ALMA.*) Reckon 'e's one o' dem what dey calls “doods,” ain't 'e?

ALMA (*laughing*). I reckon he is. Eh, Harold?

(*HAROLD is at first inclined to show anger, but smiles, then laughs good-naturedly and goes out to L. LINDY goes up and looks after him, admiringly.*)

LINDY. Yass'm, he sutt'n'ly am scrumptious-lookin'. Don't wondah Miss Roof laks 'im.

ALMA. Do you think she does, Lindy Jane?

LINDY. T'ink? Ah knows it. She's all et up wiv um. Jes' can't t'ink o' nuffin 'r nobuddy else. Don' won-

dah. Yo' 'n' him sutt'nly do look lak yo' was raight out o' one o' dem fashion books.

ALMA. Oh, Lindy!

LINDY (*looking her over*). Wal, yo' does, suah 'nough. Jes' look at dem fixin's. Ah could stan' yuh 'n' nevah take mah eyes off yo' fo' a week.

ALMA. Thank you, Lindy, but I'm afraid that would hardly do. Miss Winn might send me home as a nuisance, if I interfered with your duties in that way. (*Glances off c.*) There's somebody at the door, Lindy.

LINDY (*looking*). Yass'm, dat's Mis' Poplin. Reckon she's got some mo' sym't'ms t' tell about.

(*Goes to D. F. and admits MRS. P., who, as she sees ALMA, at first brightens up with curiosity and admiration, then puts on a doleful look and sinks into the chair, R. C., which LINDY offers her.*)

ALMA. Good-afternoon, Mrs. Poplin. How are you feeling to-day?

MRS. P. Very poorly, thank you, miss. (*Puts hand on left side.*) I've got sech a pain here. I'm afeared it's go'n' t' turn out t' be appendiceetus. I'm sure I've got the sym'toms.

ALMA. Oh, I hope not. I hardly think it's that, for appendicitis comes on the right side.

MRS. P. (*a bit nonplussed, but not to be caught, changing hands to other side*). M'm—yes, of course, I know it does. It extends over. I felt it first on the left, 'n' now it's gone over to the right. Oh, I'm sure it's the sym'toms. I read 'em all up.

LINDY. Ah bet it is. Mis' Poplin she knows 'em all—dem sym't'ms.

ALMA. It doesn't seem to me you ought to be out, if you are coming down with appendicitis. It's very serious, you know, and you may have to have an operation.

MRS. P. Oh, good land, don't say that; it would surely be the end of me. I d' know, though, but it would be jest 's well. Ain't much good o' livin' al'ays sick, 's I be, 'n' I guess it's jest 's well t' go sudd'n. (*Rises feebly.*) Where's Miss Winn, Lindy? I come over t' see 'f I could borrow her hot water bottle.

LINDY. She's went to de sto', but Ah guess she be back

soon. Yo' come out 'n d' kitchen 'n' Ah'll see 'f Ah can't find it. (*Goes L.*)

MRS. P. (*following slowly*). Thanks, Lindy Jane, I will. (*Exit LINDY, L.* MRS. P. *pauses L., turns and looks at ALMA, who has gone up to D. F.*) Visitin' Ruth, ain't y'?

ALMA. Yes.

MRS. P. I heard she had stylish friends in the city. You're the one she staid with in New York, ain't y'?

ALMA. Yes, she visited me a week at Christmas time, and again in May, after we left school. I am very fond of Ruth. She's a lovely girl.

MRS. P. I guess you ain't the only one 't thinks so. That Mr. Vincent seems t' be shinin' up to her consid'able. Poor Len Everett's had t' take a back seat. I never say much about other folks' affairs—it ain't me—but I can't help sayin' this much, that I don't think Ruth Winn's treat'n' Len Everett exactly right, shakin' him f'r that city feller what's puttin' on sech style, boardin' at the hotel 'n' all—after they'd be'n as good 's engaged f'r years—'r at least lett'n' folks around here take it f'r granted they would be. But that comes fr'm goin' to the city 'n' seein' style, 'n' gitt'n' notions. Of course, it ain't none o' my business, 'n' it ain't me t' interfere, but I should think, after the way her mother —

ALMA. Ruth's mother?

MRS. P. Yes. They say she was a city girl—'t any rate, he went away 'n' married her, 'n' nobuddy around here knows who she was, 'r anything about her. Of course, I ain't sayin' they was anything wrong, but folks always thought —

JOSIAH (*suddenly thrusting head in door or window*). Umbrellas t' mend?

(*ALMA starts ; MRS. P. jumps, pretending to be faint.*)

MRS. P. Goodness—oh!—mercy sakes alive — (*Sees JOSIAH.*) Oh, it's you, is it, Josiah Tizzard? I might 'a' knowed. You give me sech a start, I declare, I'm that faint — (*Sinks into chair.*)

ALMA (*going to her*). Shall I call somebody?

MRS. P. (*recovering*). No, thanks; it ain't nothin' much,

HOME TIES

only y' see, I'm that weak. I think my heart's affected —

JOSIAH (*who has entered, now coming down to L. C.*). Hope it's love.

MRS. P. What's that? Love? H'm! I guess if it is, it ain't f'r you. Land, Josiah Tizzard, ain't you never go'n' t' give me a minute's peace? (*To ALMA.*) He jest tags me up the hull time.

ALMA. Is he one of your "symptoms"

MRS. P. Huh! guess he is. D' know but he'll be the death o' me, too. (*Rises.*) Ain't no operation 's I know of that'll cure me o' him. (*L.*)

ALMA. Oh, yes, there is.

MRS. P. I'd like t' know what. I'd try it.

ALMA. Why—marriage.

MRS. P. Ma—o-o-h,—h'm! Wal, I guess —

(*Tosses her head, with a disdainful look at JOSIAH, and exits, L.*)

JOSIAH. Good f'r you, miss. That's what I b'en a-gitt'n' at f'r the last five years; but she won't listen t' me.

ALMA. So you're courting her, are you?

JOSIAH. Hev b'en f'r a long time. Don't seem t' make much headway, though. Widders are stubb'rn critters.

ALMA. Well, there's nothing like patience, and I think you'll win in the end.

JOSIAH. Do y', miss?

ALMA. Yes, I do. I see the "symptoms."

JOSIAH. Glad y' do. If you could make out marryin' me was a disease, I cal'late she'd have me. Wal, I must jog along. (*Up C.*) Ain't got no umbrellas y' want mended, hev y'?

ALMA. No, not just at present, thank you; but if I should have, I'll let you know.

JOSIAH (*in D. F.*). Thanks. Guarantee a fust-class job. 'M goin' t' the village f'r a spell. Stop on m' way back 'n' see 'f Miss Winn's got any work t' be done. Good-day, miss. Much erbleeged.

(*Exit to L. ALMA stands looking after him, smiling.*)

(*Enter RUTH, R.*)

RUTH. Hello, Alma. Waiting for me?

HOME TIES

ALMA (*turning*). Yes, and I began to think you never were coming. But I have been sufficiently amused. Mr. Tizzard has been here, and his innamorata, Mrs. Poplin.

RUTH. Then you couldn't have lacked for entertainment. I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, but I was bathing my head. I have been having a terrible headache.

ALMA. I don't wonder. I should think a girl with two such ardent suitors would have a headache.

RUTH. Alma!

ALMA. Well, it's true. That Mr. Everett really seems to be in desperate straits, and as for Harold Vincent—well, I declare, he out-Romeos Romeo.

RUTH. Was he here?

ALMA. Here? Of course he was here, and dying to see you, as usual. Do you—excuse me, dear, but you know I mean well, even if I do seem to meddle. May I say something?

(They are down c., or sitting on sofa, L.)

RUTH. Why, of course you may, Alma. Didn't we promise to confide in each other, and have no secrets?

ALMA. Ah, yes, but that was before love entered into the game. It's Harold Vincent I want to know about, Ruth. Do you love him?

RUTH. Love him? You know I do, love him with all my heart. You knew it last winter, when I first met him. I loved him then—at first sight—I love him now, more than ever—more and more!

ALMA. Goodness, and you out-Juliet Juliet. It is serious, indeed. Has he—m'm—asked you to——

RUTH. N-no.

ALMA. But if he does, you mean to say——

RUTH. "Yes."

ALMA. Then may you be happy. But I had hoped that—well, that it would be different.

RUTH. You think I am not good enough for him—that I am beneath him.

ALMA. No—oh, no, not that. Quite to the contrary, I—but, there, I'm getting to be a regular mischief-maker, and I'd better mind my own business. If your head is better, let's go out and have a game of tennis. Romeo is out there, on nettles because his Juliet doesn't appear, so let us hie ourselves hither and end his suspense.

HOME TIES

RUTH (*smiling*). If you will stop your nonsense, and not say such things where anybody can hear you.

ALMA. All right; I promise. (*Up in D. F.*) Come along.

RUTH. But I'll have to run up-stairs and get my hat. The sun is very bright. (R.)

ALMA. Well, we'll be out there waiting for you.

(*Exit RUTH, R. ALMA, about to go out, meets AUNT M., who enters C. D. from L., looking somewhat more serious than usual.*)

AUNT M. Oh, good-afternoon, Miss Wayne. Ruth here?

ALMA. She just went up after her hat. We are going to have a game of tennis.

AUNT M. Well, before she comes down, I want to ask you something. I s'pose it'll seem like meddlin', but you know I brought her up, and have been like a mother to her.

ALMA. Yes, Miss Winn.

(*HAROLD heard laughing, off.*)

AUNT M. Well, I'm worried about that city fellow. Is he—do you think he means anything by coming here?

ALMA. Yes. I think he means to win Ruth, if possible.

AUNT M. And you think it is—that she —

ALMA. I think she cares for him.

AUNT M. Thinks she does. But I tell you what, I believe it's Len Everett she really loves, after all.

ALMA. Miss Winn!

AUNT M. (*looking R.*). I may be crazy, but for an old maid I think I've got a pretty good idea of such things. That Mr. Vincent is good-looking, and all that, but I don't believe he's steady. It's only natural, seems to me, that he'd get tired of any girl, after a while, and—well, it'd kill me if Ruth's heart was broken, too, like her—but there, I'm rattling on, and to almost a perfect stranger. Only I thought—it kind of occurred to me, that, being a city girl and all, you might not object to being kind of extra nice to—to Len Everett, you see—as if you—well, was kind of taken with him, and maybe—there, I guess you think I'm pretty bold.

ALMA (*at first puzzled, then amused, finally struck by the brightness of the idea*). Oh—why—Miss Winn, I—

candidly, I don't think I'd mind flirting a little bit, and—well, the fact is, it would be worth while to make an impression on Mr. Everett, and in such a good cause, too. I'll—yes, I'll do it. That is,—try!

AUNT M. Good. Of course, you may find Len Everett kind of offish just at first, he's that cut up about Ruth, but he's more than flesh and blood if he can help brightening up a bit when you give him a few smiles.

ALMA. Dear me, I'm afraid you think me a sad coquette.

AUNT M. (*smiling*). M'm—well, I don't know about the “sad” part.

ALMA. Oh, Miss Winn, how unkind. What have I done —

AUNT M. Nothing, my dear, I was just trying to tease you. All I meant was, I don't see how any man could resist you, once you went to work—but there, I guess I'm making it worse. I hope you're not offended.

ALMA. Mercy, no; you have paid me quite a compliment. But I'll tell you what, I think you might follow my lead with good results.

AUNT M. Me? I don't see what you mean by that. What could I do?

ALMA. Oh,—flirt!

AUNT M. What—me? For goodness' sake, who with?

ALMA. Mr. Tizzard.

AUNT M. Josiah Tizzard? Are you crazy? What for?

ALMA. For the same reason you want me to smile on Mr. Everett, to make somebody jealous and help Mr. Cupid along.

AUNT M. Cupid? Well, of all things! Make who jealous?

ALMA. Mrs. Poplin. Don't you understand? Make her think you favor Mr. Tizzard, and see if she doesn't make up her mind she wants him, as soon as she thinks you are trying to cut her out.

AUNT M. Me?—cut out Mrs. Poplin—with Josiah Tizzard? I wouldn't have him if he was the only man under the sun.

ALMA. I don't suppose you would, but poor soul, he's getting desperate, and I think it's your duty to help him along. And if you make her jealous —

AUNT M. But I wouldn't know how to begin. I never flirted in my life —

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ALMA. Oh, that will be all right. All you have to do is watch me. If necessary, I could give you a few private lessons. You might find it useful to know how some time.

AUNT M. Well, if you ain't a case. I always heard that city girls—but I guess I'm a little too old to begin flirting—

ALMA. Nothing of the sort. It's your duty. Think of poor Josiah.

AUNT M. I declare, I don't know but it would be fun. I'll do it. Only I'm afraid it'll get me talked about—me flirting, at my time of life.

ALMA. But you needn't do it in public, only on the quiet. And think in what a good cause it is. Poor Mr. Tizzard!

AUNT M. I'm not so sure but what I'd be doing him a bigger favor by marrying her to somebody else—

ALMA. Or marrying him yourself?

AUNT M. What—me? Of all things! If that's the way you're going to look at it—

ALMA. No, of course not. I was only joking.

(*Enter RUTH, R., with hat. ALMA looks at AUNT M., smiling, and holds up a finger, warningly.*)

RUTH. I'm ready. Sorry I was so long, but I stopped to brush my hair. (*Goes up, followed by ALMA.*) Coming out, auntie?

AUNT M. No, not now. I've got something else to do.

(*RUTH goes out C. D. to R. ALMA pauses in exit.*)

ALMA. Oh, by the way, Mrs. Poplin is in there. I believe she has discovered some new symptoms and wants to tell you about them.

AUNT M. What now, I wonder?

ALMA. Oh, just a little touch of appendicitis. Now, don't forget, Miss Winn—and if you get stuck, watch me.

(*ALMA laughs and exits to R. AUNT M. looks after her a moment, shaking her head, then smiling to herself. She goes L., and is about to exit, when MARTIN enters C. D. from L. She comes back to C., as he speaks.*)

MARTIN. Well, Melissa.

AUNT M. Yes, Martin.

MARTIN. He's come after her.

AUNT M. Now, Martin, don't begin to take it that way, right at first. He seems to be a nice sort of fellow, and I don't believe he means anything that ain't right. Besides, it may not come to anything. Maybe it's the best thing in the world for them all to be here t'gether, where it can work itself out for the best.

MARTIN. For the best? With that city fellow that she's all wrapped up in, here to take her away from us? I just met him out there, and he said he wanted to speak to me in private—got something he wants to say to me. Don't you suppose I know what it is? Oh, but it's come like a thunderclap, just as it did that other time——

AUNT M. Martin! Why, what do you want to take it so seriously for? If you tell him no—send him away, and tell her—she'll give him up——

MARTIN. But I tell you, Melissa, she's bewitched, just the way her mother was. It's not only him, it's the city—the world—and he's the opportunity for her to get to them. He—with his face like—— (*Turns away, overcome.*)

AUNT M. Like—why, Martin, what do you mean?—like who?

MARTIN. Him!—like the man who—the man I ought to have killed, but didn't. Yes, he looks like that man—as he did then, when he turned my poor Clara's head—dazzled her eyes and her brain with his soft ways, his fine promises, and took her away from me—her husband. Yes, I ought to have killed him, but I didn't, because of her, and the little one—the poor, motherless little one, who has never dreamed that her mother wasn't all that a mother should be. And I let him live, and now—now another, looking like him, with the same handsome face and the same soft, winning ways, comes and wants to take that baby—my child—and hers—away from me. No, he shan't, I say—he shan't!

(*They have been down c. At the beginning of this speech AUNT M. sinks into a chair, listening with surprise and growing alarm. MARTIN stands c., speaking with*

suppressed excitement, until near the end of his speech, when he reaches a high pitch, finally going up to D. F., as if to rush out, but pauses in exit, looking off to R.)

AUNT M. Martin, oh, Martin—don't! Don't bring it all up again.

MARTIN. He brought it up—that face! There he is, out there, smilin' at her, and she at him.

AUNT M. *(rising, going up and trying to calm him)*. But, Martin, he hasn't done anything, except love our Ruth and want her—and how can we blame him for that? He hasn't carried her away, or done anything wrong. He's come here—to ask you—to —

MARTIN *(looking off, calmer, but still greatly agitated)*. With that face—the face of—that other —

AUNT M. But what of that? It only happens so, and—why, Martin, you don't think that—that he —

MARTIN. I don't know—it might be—stranger things have happened —

AUNT M. But it isn't the same name. His name was—it wasn't Vincent.

MARTIN. No, I know it wasn't, but for all that—oh, I don't know—I—but I mean to find out. Yes, I'll ask him. I'll ask him who his father was, and I'll make him tell me the truth.

AUNT M. Wait, Martin; there may be another way. What if she didn't really love him so much, after all—if it was only a kind of infatuation, and we could make her see that it's Len Everett that she cares for. Wouldn't that be better than—the other way?

MARTIN. What—do you think we could do that? She hardly looks at Len; she doesn't want him. It's that other one, I tell you, and I may have to—yes, if it comes to it, I'll tell her —

AUNT M. Martin—not —

MARTIN. Yes—the truth about her mother.

AUNT M. Oh, Martin, you wouldn't do that—you couldn't —

MARTIN. To save her, I could—I would. But I'll see him first, and find out.

AUNT M. But you'll be careful, Martin—you'll be careful?

(She is by his side, trying to soothe him, urging him away from door, down R. C., when MRS. P. appears L.)

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MRS. P. Oh, 'xcuse me. 'M I interferin'?

AUNT M. No, Mrs. Poplin, of course not. Did Lindy find the hot water bottle for you?

MRS. P. (*coming to C.*). Yes, thanks, she did. (*Shows small package which she carries.*) I'm goin' t' fill it with ice-cold water and hold it on my side. They says that's good f'r appendiceetus. Do you think it is, Mr. Winn?

MARTIN (*who has gone R., about to go out, now turns*). Why, have you got that now?

MRS. P. I've got the sym'toms, but I hope this'll help it. Oh, Mr. Winn, I—— You can't imagine how I suffer.

MARTIN. No, I guess my imagination isn't quite so strong as yours.

(*Exit, R.*)

MRS. P. My! ain't he short? (*Goes to R. and sits.*)

AUNT M. (*C.*). Martin isn't very well, I guess. You mustn't mind him.

MRS. P. Oh, I don't. The men are all alike. But it seems t' me he looks kind o' worried about somethin'. I hope it ain't about Ruth 'n' her city beau. Of course, I ain't pryin'—that ain't me—but, land, I've got eyes, 'n' a person can't help seein' things. (*Turns and looks out C. D.*) Playin' that long tennis game, ain't they? I don't see Len Everett out there.

AUNT M. Why, no, of course not. I—I don't think he plays lawn tennis. Besides, Len hasn't been over to-day. I guess he's busy.

MRS. P. Mebbe he is. 'T any rate, I guess they wouldn't think he was good enough t' play with them. Len ain't what you'd call stylish, but for my part, as to bein' a good husband—'specially for a girl like Ruth, who—but there, I guess you think I'm meddlin', and that ain't me. Only, y' know, nat'rally I take a sort of an interest in Ruth, knowin' her so well, 'n' her father 'n' you, 'n' all. I hope you understand how I feel about it, Miss Winn?

AUNT M. Why, of course; only I wouldn't imagine too much, if I was you. Seems to me you need all your imagination for your "symptoms."

MRS. P. D' y' mean that for a slur? Wal, even if y' do,

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I f'rgive y'. It's my lot t' be misunderstood, 'n' not git sympathy. Mebbe when I'm gone, folks 'll believe I really was sick.

(Covers her face with hand, sniveling.)

AUNT M. I didn't mean anything, Mrs. Poplin. I was only joking. *(Rises.)* Why, here comes Len Everett now.

MRS. P. You don't say. I wonder what he wants?

AUNT M. Oh, I guess he just ran over. *(Goes to C. D., meets LEN., who enters from L.)* How d' do, Len?

LEN. Good-afternoon, Miss Winn. *(To MRS. P.)* How do you do, Mrs. Poplin?

MRS. P. Good-afternoon.

LEN. I wanted to see Mr. Winn a minute, Miss Winn. Is he here?

AUNT M. Yes, Len, I'll call him.

(Exit, R.)

MRS. P. *(she has risen, is now up C., looking off)*. I was jest sayin' t' Miss Winn, Len, 't I wondered if you didn't ever play long tennis.

LEN. *(down R.)*. Tennis? No. I have better use for my time than tossing a ball back and forth in the air. Life is too short for that sort of thing.

MRS. P. Yes, life is so uncertain. I guess I realize that, the condition I'm in. But they seem t' think it's all they is. Ruth and that city feller seem t' be pretty thick. Goin' t' let him cut you out, Len?

LEN. I don't know what you mean, Mrs. Poplin.

MRS. P. Land, I guess you do. You needn't think you can fool me, Len Everett. I've known you ever sence you was a baby, 'n' Ruth Winn, too, 'n' I c'n see what's goin' on here 's plain 's I want to. *(He makes a gesture of remonstrance.)* Oh, you may deny it, but I've got eyes, 'n' a little common sense, I hope. If I was you, I wouldn't act like a fool 'n' give up so easy, the very first thing.

LEN. Mrs. Poplin —

MRS. P. There now, don't git mad. I'm goin' t' say what I think, b'cause I know it's f'r your good, 'n' if you don't like it, well, sometimes the bitterest pill 't's the

hardest t' swaller is what we need the most. If you let that city feller carry off Ruth Winn, without givin' him a tussle for it, you ain't the man I al'ays took y' for.

LEN. Indeed? You are plain spoken and no mistake, Mrs. Poplin. But, seeing you have taken it upon yourself to run my affairs, please tell me what you think I ought to do.

MRS. P. Be a man, that's what, 'n' not a ninny. My opinion is that Ruth Winn knows you're worth a hundred o' that feller any day, only he knows how t' make love, 'n' you don't. She's kind o' took with him, 'n' the idee o' city life, 'n' all that, but she ain't his kind, 'n'—say, Len, I've got an idee.

LEN. I should say so—quite a number of them. What's the latest?

MRS. P. (*getting close to him, speaking confidentially, with a glance out c.*). You make up to that city girl.

LEN. (*getting away from her*). What?

MRS. P. Oh, I ain't crazy. I jest thought it might be worth tryin' t' make Ruth Winn jealous a little, 'n' see what comes of it.

LEN. Jealous? She doesn't care enough for me for that.

MRS. P. I've heard 't love's blind, 'n' I declare, you prove it. You couldn't see through a barn door wide open, where y'r own happiness is concerned. I hate t' see a man give up s' easy. Look at Josiah Tizzard. Why, they ain't no gett'n' red o' him. I've declared a thousand times I wouldn't have him, but I may have t', after all, t' stop his actions. Then look at you. You say you love Ruth, 'n' let on you can't live without her, 'n' then the very first dude 't comes along, you up 'n' let him have her, without s' much 's putt'n' in a previous claim.

LEN. But, Mrs. Poplin, you don't understand. I am only thinking of Ruth's happiness.

MRS. P. Yes, 'n' lett'n' y'r own go t' smash. B'sides, I ain't s' sure but if y'r thinkin' of her happiness, you'll try t' keep that city feller from gitt'n' her, 'stid of step-pin' aside 'n' makin' the way clear for him. Ain't it ever occurred t' you that mebbe it's you she likes best after all, only he's kind o' dazzled her—him 'n' the city 'n' all—and——

LEN. No—no. I wish I could think that.

MRS. P. Wal, anyhow, make an effort. Carry on a bit with that city girl, 's I said, 'n' see how Ruth takes it.

LEN. I wouldn't stoop to such a thing.

MRS. P. Huh! "All's fair in love 'n' war," I've heard say, 'n' I don't see 's there'd be anything stoopin' about it. Supposin' you think it over. (*She goes L.*) I declare, I f'rgot t' ask Miss Winn t' borrow some mustard. I want t' try a mustard paste on m' side, 'f this hot water bottle don't do no good. I'll go 'n' ask her now. (*L.*) Better think it over, Len. Remember, "all's fair ——"

(*Exit, L.*)

(*He stands C., looking after her, at first showing some annoyance, then smiling to himself knowingly, with a slight sideways motion of his head, as if thinking, "Well, I don't know; it might be worth trying."* He ponders a moment longer, then starts up C., with a sudden air of "I'll do it!") As he is about to exit C., ALMA runs in, gaily, carrying a tennis racquet. He comes back to R. C., she to C.)

ALMA. Good-afternoon, Mr. Everett. In here all by yourself? Why don't you come out and join us? Don't you ever play tennis?

LEN. No. But—I wish I did.

ALMA. Well, I don't see anything to hinder your learning. Just at the present moment, however, I'm simply perishing for a drink. Would you mind seeing if Lindy will bring me some water?

LEN. Not at all. (*Goes L. Calls off.*) Lindy—Lindy Jane.

LINDY (*off L.*). Yassir. What yo' want?

LEN. Won't you bring a glass of water for Miss Wayne, please? (*Comes back to C.*) Now, I trust we can save you from perishing.

ALMA. Thank you. (*After a slight pause.*) M'm—do you like the country, Mr. Everett?

LEN. The country? Why, of course I do. It's my home.

ALMA. Yes, of course—I know it is. But I mean—don't you ever wish you lived in the city—that you were where there was more going on, where you could see

more? It seems to me I should dry up and blow away, if I had to stay here. Of course, it's all very nice in the summer, for a few weeks—it's grand, then—but all the year round—mercy!

LEN. But we have been brought up differently, you know, and —— (*Enter LINDY, L., with glass of water.*) Here's the water, Miss Wayne.

(*Takes glass from LINDY and gives it to her. LINDY tarries L.*)

ALMA. Thank you. (*Drinks nearly all in the glass, which she then gives to LINDY.*) Thank you, Lindy. You've saved my life.

LINDY. La, missy, how Ah done that?

ALMA. Why, I was dying of thirst, and you quenched it.

LINDY. Yass'm, Ah done squenched it. Yo's welcome. (*Starts L., but comes back, looking at ALMA with great admiration.*) My, but dat suah am a purty dress, 'n' all. (*To LEN.*) Ain't she jes' scrumptious?

ALMA. Why, Lindy.

LEN. (*smiling*). Yes, Lindy, I quite agree with you.

LINDY. Yassir, she sutt'n'ly do look grand. 'F Ah was a fellah, Ah 'spect 's how Ah'd be a-fallin' raight in lub wid 'er. Ain't yo' gwine do it, Misser Ev'rett?

(LEN. *turns away toward R.*; ALMA *blushingly goes to LINDY.*)

ALMA. Why, Lindy, you mustn't talk like that. You may go now. (*She finally urges her off L.*) Dear me, she's almost as bad as that funny Mrs. Poplin, isn't she? (*Goes to LEN.; stands close to him.*) You mustn't mind her, Mr. Everett, she's only a child, and—oh, excuse me. I didn't mean—— (*He turns to her, with an expression of kindly interest, as if to show appreciation of her sympathy, and she is about to place a hand on his arm, looking up into his face, when RUTH enters suddenly, C., accompanied by HAROLD. RUTH sees them; seems surprised at their friendliness. HAROLD also shows surprise, mingled with annoyance. ALMA seeing them, steps a short distance away from LEN.*) Oh, Ruth, Mr. Everett says he doesn't know how to play tennis, and I

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was just telling him he ought to learn. Suppose we teach him?

RUTH. Why, yes, of-course. If you wish to learn, Len.

LEN. (*going up R.*). Thank you, perhaps—some other time.

ALMA. That'll make four, Ruth—just enough. You and Harold can play against Mr. Everett and me, and—oh, by the way, I don't believe they have met.

RUTH. Oh, I beg your pardon, Len; this is Mr. Vincent. Harold, my old friend, Leonard Everett. (*LEN. and HAROLD exchange greetings, shaking hands somewhat constrainedly. LEN. goes up to C. D. Enter AUNT M., L., followed by MRS. P.*) Are you going, Len?

LEN. Yes. I just started to drive over to Harleyville.

ALMA (*going up by him, looking off*). Oh, is that your horse out there?

LEN. Yes. I've just bought him. What do you think of him?

ALMA. He's a beauty. Please take me along, won't you? I'd love to have a ride.

LEN. Would you, really?

ALMA. I should say so. May I?

LEN. If they'll excuse you?

ALMA. Why, of course they will. (*To RUTH.*) Won't you?

RUTH (*somewhat taken aback, showing her surprise, which is almost chagrin, in spite of herself*). Certainly.

ALMA. Come on, Mr. Everett. I'm just crazy for a ride in that buggy, behind that horse.

(*She goes off to L., in high spirits, accompanied by LEN., who nods to the others as he goes. AUNT M. goes up and looks off after them.*)

AUNT M. (*calling*). Bring her back in time for supper, Len.

LEN. (*without*). All right, Miss Winn; I will.

ALMA (*without*). Sure. Good-bye, all!

(*RUTH goes down to R., looking rather solemn, as if hardly able to grasp the situation. HAROLD follows her, and they talk in pantomime. AUNT M. crosses to L., near MRS. P.*)

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AUNT M. (to MRS. P.). Well!—what do you think of that?

MRS. P. (*motioning toward RUTH and HAROLD*). Sh! It's beginnin' t' work. (*Goes up.*) I must be goin' now. (*To RUTH and HAROLD.*) Good-afternoon.

RUTH (*turning*). Good-bye, Mrs. Poplin. Come over again soon.

MRS. P. Thanks, I will if I feel able. But you 'n' your friend come over 'n' see me. (*Down R. C.—to HAROLD.*) Be pleased t' have you, Mr.—Vincent. My home ain't grand, but sech as it is, you'll be welcome.

(*He bows and smiles condescendingly. She crosses back to L., to get the small package which she has left on chair or table. AUNT M. is L. C. All of a sudden JOSIAH puts his head in C. D.*)

JOSIAH. Umbrellas t' mend?

AUNT M. Oh, that you, Josiah? Come in.

JOSIAH (*entering*). Thanks. Don't care 'f I do. (*To RUTH and HAROLD.*) How d' do, folks? (*Sees MRS. P.*) Still here, Mari'?

MRS. P. (*disdainfully*). Mari'!—huh!

AUNT M. (*to JOSIAH, cordially, bringing a chair*). Now, sit right down, Josiah. You must be tired, after your walk in the hot sun. Shan't I get you a drink?

JOSIAH. No, thanks, Miss Winn; I ain't dry.

AUNT M. I should think you would be. (*Gets fan from table or mantel.*) We wouldn't want you to get a sun-stroke. (*Fans him.*)

JOSIAH (*bewildered by her attention, but inclined to like it*). Wal, 'tis kind o' warmish.

AUNT M. Let me take your hat.

(*AUNT M. takes his hat, lays it on table, then goes back and continues to fan him. MRS. P. looks at them, surprised, and beginning to bristle up. She sniffs, with a glare at AUNT M., who pretends not to notice, but still hovers over JOSIAH.*)

JOSIAH (*to HAROLD*). No umbrellas t' mend?

HAROLD (*laughing*). No, thanks, not to-day.

(*He and RUTH are R., looking on with a show of amusement.*)

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MRS. P. (*preparing to go*). I'm goin'. Nobuddy seems t' think I'm sufferin' fr'm the hot sun, 'n' me weak 's I am. (*They do not notice her. She goes up to C. D.*) I'm goin' on home, Miss Winn. Thanks f'r the hot water bottle.

AUNT M. You're welcome. Going, are you?

MRS. P. Yes. (*With a glance at JOSIAH.*) 'N' if any-buddy's goin' my way —

JOSIAH (*rising*). Why, yes—I be.

AUNT M. (*giving him his hat*). Now, you be careful, Josiah, and not get overcome, it's so hot. (*Puts his hat on, showing solicitude.*) You see that he doesn't overexert himself, won't you, Mrs. Poplin? If you let him get a sunstroke, I'll never forgive you.

MRS. P. Huh! I guess Josiah Tizzard's able t' take care of himself; you needn't worry. Come on, Josiah, if you're going with me.

(*She urges JOSIAH up C., and they go off to R. RUTH follows, with a glance at HAROLD, who is about to accompany her, when MARTIN enters R. AUNT M. is about to go to him, but he motions for her to leave and she exits L. HAROLD looks around, just as he is going out, and pauses as he sees MARTIN, coming back part way down C.*)

HAROLD. Why, good-afternoon, Mr. Winn.

MARTIN. Good-afternoon. Having a good time in the country?

HAROLD (*with a short, insincere laugh*). Why, yes, of course I am. I think "rural felicity" is great.

MARTIN. Oh, you do?—"rural felicity"? It isn't always that, young man. Sometimes the "felicity," as you call it, gets upset, and things aren't as smooth and full of happiness as they look. Country people have hearts, too, you know—the same as you that live off there in the big city and see and know the world.

HAROLD. Why, of course they have. I never doubted that, Mr. Winn. Haven't I come here to claim one of the best and truest hearts that ever beat—the heart of —

MARTIN. Of my little girl. Yes, I know. You want her. You want to take her away from me, don't you? Do you know what that means to me, Mr. Vincent?

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HAROLD. I—I know what it means to me, and what it will mean to her. I love her, and with that love I have everything that can make her happy—wealth, position—all that a girl can desire. She loves me too, Mr. Winn—she has told me so—and——

MARTIN. I know she thinks she does, and maybe it's so. She hasn't seen much of the world, and she is dazzled by you and the world you offer to take her into. I know. You may mean well—I'm not saying that I doubt you do—but I'm not sure—not sure it would be for her good, for her happiness——

HAROLD (*again laughing lightly*). Pshaw!—why, of course it would. Just think what I can give her, compared to what she has here.

MARTIN. You can't give her more love, more tender care—a home where she will be so safe from the dangers of the great world. I know what the world is—what it means to live as you live——

HAROLD. Ha! how should you know? You mustn't believe all you read about city life, about—us—and all that. It's nonsense, and you're only standing in her light—in the way of her happiness.

MARTIN. I know—I know——

(RUTH suddenly appears in C. D.; does not see MARTIN, who stands R. C. HAROLD is up C.)

RUTH. Why, Harold, how long you are. Aren't you coming? I want you.

HAROLD. Oh, do you? (*Smiles at MARTIN.*) I'm coming—at once.

(*He goes to her, puts out his hand to her, and they go merrily off to L. He is heard again laughing, in the same manner as before, as they disappear. MARTIN goes up, looks after them, sadly shakes his head, slowly.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as before, one week later. It is evening, and the doors and windows are open, disclosing the yard and lawn, with decorations of Japanese lanterns, etc. Music—that of piano, organ or a small country orchestra—may be heard outside. LINDY is discovered standing up c., looking off, in considerable excitement. If there is music, she may be dancing to it, thinking that she is unnoticed. AUNT M. enters L.; stands a moment watching her, before speaking.*

AUNT M. Well, Lindy Jane—enjoying yourself?

LINDY. Yass'm, Ah is. 'Scuse me, but 's the veh firs' party Ah evah was at, 'n' Ah reckon Ah d' know jes' how t' act. Golly, ain' dey all 'nj'yin' deyseves!

AUNT M. I s'pose they are, and I'm glad of it. A party's lots of trouble and I didn't feel much like having it, but Ruth wanted to, and of course her father set in to let her have her own way, as usual. You can't blame young folks, I suppose, for wanting to have a good time.

LINDY. No, 'm. Ole folks, too, Ah reckon. Mis' Poplin, she's out dare, dressed up t' kingdom come; 'n' Mistah Tizzard, too.

AUNT M. Yes, Ruth insisted on inviting them. Said she wanted all her friends to come and have a good time, and I guess it's just as well, or they'd have said she was stuck-up. You'd better go out and see to the refreshments, Lindy Jane. It'll soon be time to serve them.

LINDY (*starting to go L., but lingering to look off c.*). Yass'm. Golly, but dat ice-cream's lickin' good—cold, too.

AUNT M. Of course it is. You don't expect ice-cream to be hot, do you? Now, you go and cut the cake, and get things ready. I'll be out in a few minutes and help. Mrs. Poplin said she'd help, too, and I'll let her know it's most time.

LINDY (L.). Yass'm. Reckon dey's all gwine be willin' t' help, when 't comes t' eat'n'. Me, too. He! he!

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(Exit L., chuckling to herself.)

(AUNT M. goes up C. and stands looking off, just as MARTIN enters R. He pauses R. C.)

MARTIN. They seem to be enjoying it, Melissa.

AUNT M. Yes, Martin, they are. Come and look at them. I never saw our Ruthie so happy. How pretty she looks!

MARTIN (*by her side, looking off*). Yes—just like her mother.

AUNT M. Yes, Martin; but try to forget that. What's the use calling it up?

MARTIN. The use, Melissa? As if I could help it, when I see her the very image of her mother, and him by her side—with the face of that man. I tell you, Melissa, I'm living it all over again, and I don't know as I can stand much more. I feel as if I might do something desperate.

AUNT M. Oh, Martin, don't talk that way. You scare me. Don't make me go through again what I went through that other time, eighteen years ago, when it was all I could do to keep you from—from——

MARTIN. Committing murder. Yes,—murder. Say it, for it's true. If it hadn't been for you, I'd have done it, too. I've blessed you for keeping me from it, ever since, Melissa—for her sake, and yours; but I've always felt, and I do to this day, that I had a right to kill him.

AUNT M. No, no, Martin—no! Nobody ever has a right to do a thing like that. No cause ever made it right to do a wicked thing, and—but oh, Martin, we mustn't talk about it. We agreed we never would, and to-night, too,—think of it, when Ruth is having her party and they are all so happy. (*She puts her hand on his arm and urges him away from window, down to R. C.*) There, now, don't give way to such thoughts. I've got to go in the kitchen and help Lindy Jane get the refreshments ready, and I want you to chirk up and get ready to eat some ice-cream and cake. (*Goes L.*)

MARTIN. All right, Melissa, I will. Don't you worry about me.

AUNT M. That's right. You see if you can't find Mrs.

Poplin and tell her I want her. She said she'd help with the refreshments.

(Exit, L.)

(MARTIN stands C.; after a slight pause goes up, looks off again, then shakes his head slowly, as if to watch the festivities were too much for him. He walks slowly to R., near table or stand up R. C., on which is the family album. Unconsciously, his hand rests on the album and remains there for a moment, as he stands in silence, musing. Mechanically, he opens the album, slowly turning a few pages without looking at it. Then he glances down at it, still not seeming to realize what he is doing; turns another page or two, till it remains open, and he glances down at a certain picture. He remains looking at it for a moment, as recognition of the face depicted slowly comes to him. Then, with a sudden, half stifled cry, he places both hands over the picture, as if he could not bear to look at it, after a moment lifting his hands, giving one fond, agonized look at the picture, then sinks down, burying his face on his arms, which are folded over the album. He remains thus, sobbing very gently, and after a pause RUTH runs in C., at first not seeing him. She is animated, laughingly glances about, finally sees MARTIN and suddenly becomes sober, as she goes and lays a hand on his shoulder.)

RUTH. Why, father! Father—what is it? Is anything the matter?

MARTIN (looking up, with the album still open). No, dear, of course not.

RUTH (noticing the picture). Her picture. You were looking at that—the picture of my mother. Father, why have you never told me anything about her; I mean, anything about—about her death, and—and how it was that she did not live here, and that she is buried so far away——

MARTIN (putting an arm about her and urging her to C., leaving the album open on table). Why, Ruthie, dear, I have nothing to tell you, and, besides, this is no time for such memories, for anything sad, when you are having a party and everybody is so happy. There,

there, run away now, to your company, and have a good time.

RUTH (*detaining him as he tries to put her off*). But—father, there is something I wanted to speak to you about. It's Len, father—Len Everett. Don't you think it is funny, the way he is acting? I mean, with—*with Alma Wayne?*

MARTIN. Hey? With Miss Wayne? Why, how is he acting with her?

RUTH. Well, I don't know as it really is so much him as it is her, but—you know, she is a sort of a flirt—she admits it—but I didn't think she would flirt with Len, nor that he would encourage her the way he does.

MARTIN. M'm—does he? Well, perhaps he likes it. Perhaps he likes her, and—and wants her.

RUTH. Wants her? Oh, father, how ridiculous! Why, she isn't his kind at all, and I'm sure she wouldn't want him. He is only a—a farmer——

MARTIN. And you are only a farmer's daughter—or the daughter of only a farmer—and you seem to think that somebody from the city wants you.

RUTH. Oh,—well,—of course; but—why, that's different. I have been to the city, I met Mr. Vincent—Harold—there, and—of course, I don't mean to flatter myself, and I don't think I'm a bit better than Len, but it does seem as if there was quite a difference.

MARTIN. I suppose there is, in a way. But, remember, dear, if you don't want Len yourself, you mustn't object to somebody else getting him. He is too fine a man not to make some girl a good husband.

RUTH. I know it—of course; but, to tell the truth, father, I don't think Alma Wayne is worthy of him. I don't think she would make him happy, or be happy herself. But it's ridiculous to think of such a thing, I suppose. I mustn't stay here talking another minute. They'll all wonder where I am. I just wanted to ask Aunt Melissa if I could help her. Where is she?

MARTIN. In the kitchen. But she doesn't need you. Lindy is there, and Mrs. Poplin said she'd help with the refreshments. You might send her in, though.

RUTH (*going up*). Yes, I will, if I can tear her away from Mr. Tizzard. Something has come over her lately;

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she hardly leaves his side a minute. Acts as if she was afraid somebody would steal him. Ha! Ha!

(She laughs and exits, C. D. to R. MARTIN is R. LINDY sticks head in L.)

LINDY. Miss Aunt M'lissy says, whar's Mis' Poplin? Send her in.

(Exit.)

(MARTIN goes up, meets MRS. P., who hurries in from R.)

MRS. P. I declare, I most f'rgot I promised Miss Winn t' help with them refreshments. Ruth says she wants me. Land, I hope she don't think I'm tryin' t' shirk. She ought t' know better—that ain't me—but I d' know but it looks like it. 'S she out here? *(L.)*

MARTIN. Yes. Be careful you don't work too hard, Mrs. Poplin. It might be bad for your—let me see—appendicitis?

MRS. P. No, it wa'n't that. I thought it was—I was sure I had the symptoms. It was nothin' but a stitch in the side, after all.

MARTIN. Well, they say a stitch in the side saves nine —

MRS. P. Land, you mean "in time." But I ain't well. No; I think I've got weak lungs—sometimes I cough something terrible. *(Forces a slight cough.)* See how hollow it sounds?

MARTIN. Don't know but it does.

MRS. P. Yes, I think they's signs of it. *(Looks off C. to R.)* For the land, if here don't come Josiah Tizzard. He jest tags me the hull time. Don't you tell him where I be.

(She waits till she is sure JOSIAH sees her, as he looks in C., then, pretending that she wishes to avoid him, exits L.)

JOSIAH *(entering C.)*. "There she goes, sweet as a rose, all dressed up in her Sunday-go-t'-meet'n'-clothes." Thought I didn't see her, but I did. Huh! she needn't think she's the only one.

MARTIN. How you coming along, Josiah? Has she said "Yes" yet?

JOSIAH. No. Ain't asked her, right out. Wait'n' t' clinch it. *(Goes to L.; looks out.)* Lots o' love-makin' goin'

on 'round here, seems t' me. Your gal goin' t' git that city feller? Don't like his looks, much. Too fancy f'r a man, 's my 'pinion. Don't never no good come from a gal's marryin' f'r looks. 'Tain't al'ays the fine-lookin' umbreller with a silk cover that wears the best. Now, that city feller's silk all right, when it comes t' looks, but Len Everett, he's all wool 'n' a yard wide. That's my 'pinion, 'f anybuddy was t' ask it. Guess I'll go out 'n the kitchen a spell.

(Exit, L.)

(MARTIN, who is R. C., goes to R., and as he sees LEN. and ALMA coming, goes out R. They enter C. D., from L.)

ALMA. Why, Mr. Everett, you're a real gallant. I wonder where you ever learned to make so many pretty speeches?

LEN. Oh, I don't know. I suppose you think, because I have lived in the country all my life, I have no romance in my soul, and don't know how things are done out in the world?

ALMA. Why, no, I didn't mean that—of course. I was only thinking—well, I guess the more I say, the worse I make it, so I'd better keep still. Only, you see —

LEN. Yes, I see, and I understand. But you must remember, I have been to the city once or twice, for a visit; I have read a few books, and—and kept my eyes open. Haven't I had a pretty good example in gallantry and love-making, the past few weeks?

ALMA. Oh, you mean Harold Vincent, and—Ruth? Y-yes, I suppose you have. He certainly did seem to be smitten with her, and —

LEN. Did —?

ALMA. Why—m'm—I mean is, of course. Only—dear me, I'm afraid we're gossiping, and I wouldn't want to be called a gossip too. "Flirt" is bad enough.

(They are down R. C., close together, not noticing RUTH, who appears C. D., and stands for a moment watching them.)

LEN. Please don't think I ever called you that.

ALMA. But you think it.

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(She turns slightly, so as to catch a glimpse of RUTH, who does not know that ALMA sees her.)

LEN. No, I don't. I—well, I can't tell you what I think, because I am not a poet.

ALMA *(putting a hand on his shoulder, looking up into his face)*. Oh,—my, another pretty speech. I begin to think you are a poet—at heart. And, oh, it is so sweet to be admired by a poet!

(She leans slightly against him, so that from the back he may seem almost to be embracing her. RUTH stares at them, flushing, starts to come down, then tosses her head and hastily exits C. D. to R. ALMA sees her, laughs merrily, and goes up, followed part way by LEN., who does not understand.)

LEN. Now you are laughing at me. You were all the time. I might have known you would.

ALMA. Oh, how cruel. That spoils all the nice things you have said. *(Goes up.)*

LEN. *(following her)*. I'm sorry. I didn't mean anything.

ALMA. You needn't apologize. But I forgive you,—there!

(She extends her hands, which he takes, as they go out C. D. to L. As they disappear, LINDY enters L. She wears a white apron, which nearly envelops her, and is licking a large spoon.)

LINDY. M-m'm, but dat's good, dat ar ice-cream. Ah could eat a hull bushel. Nevah did see nuffin so good.

(Licks spoon industriously, as JOSIAH enters L.)

JOSIAH. What y' doin' of, Lindy Jane—gitt'n' spoony? He! He!

LINDY. Guess Ah wouldn't be de only one, 'f Ah did. Yo' 's be'n dar yo'se'f, Ah reckon.

JOSIAH. Reckon I hev'. Say, Miss Winn says f'r you t' take off that apen 'n' bring back that spoon, 'n' then tell Ruth she wants her. Wants t' ask her 'bout where t' set 'em at the table.

LINDY. All right. *(Hands him the spoon.)* Yuh, yo' take dat. *(Removes apron, which she also gives him.)* 'N' dis. Now Ah'll tell 'er.

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JOSIAH. All right. (*Drops the spoon.*)

LINDY. Now see what y' done went 'n' did. (*Picks up spoon and hands it to him. He takes it, again starts to go, trips over apron, nearly falls.*) La sakes, look out 'r yo' 's gwine break yo' neck. (*He starts again; drops spoon.*) Fo' de land o' libin'! (*Again picks up spoon, again gives it to him, and helps him out L., carefully, holding him together.*) Ah declar', he's wuss 'n' p'is'n. (*Goes up to C.*) Yuh dey comes now.

(*Enter RUTH and HAROLD, C. D. R. LINDY retires up R., and they do not notice her.*)

RUTH. Just think, Harold, it is only—about eight months, since I first met you, and it seems—why, it seems as if I had known you—almost always.

HAROLD. Yes, dear—yes, of course it does.

RUTH. Does it—really—seem so to you, too, Harold? Are you sure?

HAROLD. Of course I'm sure, you little inquisitor. It—it seems as if life began with the moment I first met you.

RUTH. M'm—that's a very pretty speech, to be sure, only—well, I—I am not sure you said it exactly as if you meant it.

HAROLD. Why, Ruth, dear, what do you mean? You aren't beginning to doubt me?

RUTH. N-no; but—er—Harold, how long have you known Alma?

HAROLD. Alma? Known her? Oh, for a long time—years; ever since we were children. Why? What has that to do with it?

RUTH. N-nothing. I wondered, that's all. That's the way I have known Leonard Everett—always—ever since we were children. We went to school together the first day either of us ever went, and he carried my lunch-basket. And he carried it every day after that—almost every day—as long as either of us went. Then we stopped going—and I went away to boarding-school, and—met you—and—how different it all is now. Isn't it?

LINDY, *who has stood up R., looking out of window or door, now looks at them, mischievously, and comes down.*)

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HAROLD. Why, yes, of course —

LINDY. He! he! Ah done cotched y' at it. Sparkin'!

RUTH. Lindy! how dare you? Go into the kitchen at once. I shall tell Aunt Melissa.

LINDY (*going L.*). Yass'm, Miss Roof. But Ah ain' gwine tell. No, sir-ree. Mout git cotched mahse'f. He! he! (*About to go out, pauses in exit.*) Miss Aunt M'lissy, she done say fo' me t' say she want yo'. He! he! he!

(*Exit LINDY, L., giggling. RUTH looks after her, blushing. HAROLD smiles indulgently.*)

RUTH. Isn't she provoking? She saw us.

HAROLD. What of it? (*He has gone R., by table, near which he now is standing.*) She's not worth noticing. Besides, I guess they all know.

(*He stands so that he casually glances down and sees the album on table. Sits down and absent-mindedly looks at the photographs. RUTH starts L., not noticing what he is doing. As she reaches L., he sees the picture at which MARTIN had been looking, starts, rises, showing surprise, which is in the nature of amazement. RUTH, in surprise at his action, goes a few steps toward C.*)

RUTH. Why, Harold, what's the matter?

HAROLD (*pointing to album*). This picture—here—who is that?

RUTH (*going to his side, looking at album*). Which one?

(*Enter MARTIN, R., unseen by them; stands looking on.*)

HAROLD. This one — (*Puts finger on picture, agitated.*)

RUTH. That? Why, that's a picture of my mother.

HAROLD. Your—mother?

RUTH. Yes, of course. But, Harold, what—you have never seen her—she died years ago, when I was a month old. What is it—what do you mean —

HAROLD. Nothing. It is nothing—I suppose it is the likeness—it looks so much like you.

RUTH. Yes, so father says. He always said I looked like her.

(*MARTIN stands R., showing signs of suppressed emotion, which has increased. He stares at HAROLD, as if mad, but succeeds in calming himself as he comes forward, but still has his eyes fixed on HAROLD's face.*)

MARTIN. Ruth, your Aunt Melissa wants you. Go to her.

RUTH. Yes, father—but —

MARTIN. Go to her, I say. (*Points L.*)

RUTH (*frightened, starting L., with a pleading look at him*).

But, father —

MARTIN. Do as I tell you. I want to speak to—to Mr. Vincent—alone —

(*RUTH, almost in tears, trembling with amazement and fear, goes out L. HAROLD stands R., by table, not comprehending what it all means, looking at RUTH, then at MARTIN. MARTIN goes L., to make sure RUTH is out of hearing, then comes back to C.*)

HAROLD. Sir! What does this mean? I don't understand —

MARTIN (*sternly*). Let me look at you. This way—turn this way. Look me full in the face.

HAROLD. Yes, sir.

(*Turns squarely to him, meeting his gaze unflinchingly.*)

MARTIN (*after a moment's piercing scrutiny of HAROLD's features*). Yes—I thought so. You have his face. (*HAROLD starts to speak, but he stops him, taking hold of his shoulders and turning him about so that he faces the table.*) Now—look at that picture. (*Causes him to look at picture in album.*) This one—there —

(*Points to picture with trembling hand, his face livid with excitement.*)

HAROLD. Yes, sir; I see it.

MARTIN. You see it—and you have seen it before —?

HAROLD. No, sir; never. Never until just now—five minutes ago. I—I don't know what you mean.

MARTIN. But you have seen her—that woman—that face —

HAROLD. No, sir, I never saw the woman—I never saw the face—I —

MARTIN. Don't lie to me!

HAROLD. Sir! If you mean to insult me—I will not stay here. If you were not her father —

(*Starts to go up, but MARTIN detains him.*)

MARTIN. You say you never saw that face—that picture—

before? Then tell me why you seemed so agitated when you saw it just now? You seemed to recognize it.

HAROLD. I recognized the picture, Mr. Winn, as the duplicate of one which I have seen before—but I never saw the original of it.

MARTIN. And where did you see the picture? Who had it?

HAROLD. I found it, sir, among some of the effects of my father, after his death.

MARTIN. Your father—that picture—but you say your name is Vincent?

HAROLD. I was adopted by my uncle when a child, and took his name, which is Vincent. My father's name —

MARTIN. Was not Vincent?

HAROLD. No, sir. It was Cranston.

MARTIN (*quivering with excitement, which he manages to suppress*). Yes, yes—Cranston—David Cranston.

HAROLD. You—you knew him?

MARTIN. That was his name, then—David Cranston?

HAROLD. Why, yes, sir, that was his name. Did you know him?

MARTIN. Know him? Know David Cranston? Yes, I knew him. And you are his son—the son of that man?

HAROLD. I don't understand, Mr. Winn. Even if you knew him, what has that to do with me?

MARTIN. With you?—when you want to marry my daughter? Then you don't know?

HAROLD. I saw very little of my father after I was a few years old, as my mother died, and I was taken to live with her brother's family. As I grew older, and became able to understand things, I began to find out that there was something about my father which they were concealing from me. He came to see me once in a while, but only for a short time, and never took me away with him. When I was about sixteen, they told me that he was dead, and—I know no more. If he did anything wrong, if he ever injured you in any way, surely, you cannot hold me responsible. I am not to blame.

MARTIN. No, you are not to blame, but—"the sins of the fathers." Fate plays us some queer tricks, Mr. Vincent. I don't want to blight your memory of your

father, but rather than have his son marry my daughter, innocent as you are, I will tell you what he did—the truth.

HAROLD. Perhaps the truth would be no worse than the suspicions I have harbored all these years, Mr. Winn. And you have made me suspect more—even worse. Isn't it best that I should know—especially if it so closely concerns your daughter and me?

MARTIN. You are right. You might as well know, at least this much: I went to the city when a young man, with a few thousand dollars my parents had left me, to see the world—"real life," as they call it. Part of my experience was falling in love with a girl whom I thought as good as she was beautiful. We were married, and not long after—well, your father came along; he was handsome, had more money than I—as we had spent nearly all of mine—and—he took her away from me. They went away together, she died in a year or so, and I swore to have revenge. Murder was in my heart, but my sister and my child kept me from it. Now, do you wonder that I don't want the son of that man to marry my daughter?

HAROLD (*who is at first duly impressed, after a moment treats the matter with comparative lightness, though not with unfeeling frivolity*). No, Mr. Winn—no,—and yet, I am not to blame. That is all in the past. I am not responsible for anything my father did. I should feel like a cad, a coward, if I were to give Ruth up because of what you have told me.

MARTIN. And I should consider you a coward if you did not give her up, if you have any realization of what it would mean to me—and what it would surely mean to her if she ever learned the truth. No, young man, I tell you it is impossible. You cannot marry my daughter.

HAROLD. You can't be so hard, so cruel, as to stand in the way of her happiness.

MARTIN. It is her happiness, her peace of mind, that I am looking out for. You must give her up.

HAROLD. You ask too much. I cannot do it. What would she say—what would she think of me——?

MARTIN. Whatever she thought, you would never see her again, and you would have the consolation of knowing

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that you had done what was best. (HAROLD *shakes his head slowly*.) You refuse?

HAROLD. I must. Your daughter loves me, Mr. Winn, and —

MARTIN. Love? Would she love you if she knew all? Do you want to force me to tell her? For that is what I shall do, if you persist in your refusal.

HAROLD (*laughing*). Well, suppose you tell her? That might be the best way. I am not afraid.

MARTIN. No!—no, she shall not know that her mother was not as good and pure as she thinks her to have been, so long as there is any other way. If I forbid her to marry you, she will obey me.

HAROLD. And you—you mean to do that?

MARTIN. I do.

HAROLD. But you must give me a chance. Give me six months—(MARTIN *shows no signs of relenting*) three—and I will abide by the result. I will go away, promising not to see her, not even to write to her, and then, if at the end of that time she still loves me and wants me to come to her, you promise to send for me and to let me make her my wife. Isn't that fair?

MARTIN (*after a pause, during which he shows painful thought and doubt*). Yes—it is fair. I—I consent. But you must go away, at once, and if you break your word in the slightest degree —

HAROLD. You may trust me. I promise, Mr. Winn, and I will keep my word. (*Goes up.*)

MARTIN. Where are you going? Not to her?

HAROLD. Yes, of course. She must not suspect—yet. Next week I will go away —

MARTIN. But you must go to-night—now—this minute—before she sees you again.

HAROLD. What!—now? Go now, without seeing her again? Why, what would she think—what would they say —?

MARTIN. I don't know—it doesn't matter—you must go — (RUTH's voice heard off L.) Be quick, she is coming —

HAROLD. Oh, well.

(*He reluctantly submits to being urged off C. to R., and exits, laughing, just as RUTH enters L. MARTIN, assuming*

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an indifferent air, comes down to C., meeting her. She goes part way up, looks off, and catches a glimpse of HAROLD.)

RUTH. Why, father, how long you have been—you and Harold. What does it mean? What have you been saying?

MARTIN. Nothing. You go now, and finish your party. They will miss you.

RUTH (*going to him*). But, father, there is something the matter. What is it? What has happened? Is it about me? Is it —

MARTIN (*tenderly, drawing her to him*). What if I should ask my little girl to make a sacrifice—to give up something which she thinks she loves very much, and trust to my judgment and advice? Could she do it—for my sake?

RUTH. Father! You mean Harold? You don't like him—I have seen that from the first—and you—you want me to give him up?

MARTIN. I want you to wait—not to trust your heart yet, until you are sure, that is all.

RUTH. But, father, if I love him, and if he loves me, as he says he does —

MARTIN. Let time prove that. I ask you to wait. Can you do that—for me?

RUTH. I'll—let me speak to him, father. (*Looks off C. to R.*) He's going!

MARTIN. Yes.

RUTH. Without saying good-bye to me. Oh, father, you sent him away!

MARTIN. Yes, Ruth.

RUTH. Oh, he must come back. (*Calls.*) Harold! Harold!

(*Runs toward door, C. MARTIN steps in front of door.*)

MARTIN. No, Ruth.

RUTH (*wavering, looking off C. to R., then back to her father*). But, father, I—I —

MARTIN. If you choose now, it must be between him and —and—me.

RUTH. Why, I don't know—I can't tell—between him and

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—and — (Hesitates a moment, with a bewildered, tearful expression, then suddenly turns to MARTIN, holding out her arms.) Father!

(He opens his arms, she falls into them and he embraces her affectionately, with a look of relief and joy, her head on his shoulder.)

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE.—*Same as before, in the evening, the following January. AUNT M. is discovered sitting by table, R., sewing; MARTIN, L., reading newspaper. A piano or organ is heard off R., and a sweet voice, supposed to be that of RUTH, is singing a sympathetic song. MARTIN looks up from paper, smiles, glances R., then lays paper on lap and looks toward AUNT M.*

MARTIN. Singing again. Sounds good, doesn't it?

AUNT M. Yes, it does. Quite like old times, before—before she went away.

MARTIN. She doesn't hear from him very often, does she, now?

AUNT M. No; I don't believe she has for—why, I guess it must be two or three months. She never says much about it, but the last letter she got she told me she wasn't going to answer it.

MARTIN. It doesn't seem to be breaking her heart, after all.

AUNT M. No. To tell the truth, I don't think she cares so very much. I guess she begins to see that he isn't all there is, and I wouldn't be surprised if—well, haven't you noticed anything?

MARTIN. As if I could help noticing. And now to hear her singing again — (*Rises.*) I begin to feel as if I had my own little girl back, just as she used to be. (*Goes up and looks out of window.*) It still keeps on snowing. It must be getting pretty deep.

AUNT M. Yes, it must.

(*Enter LINDY, L., enveloped in a large shawl, on which there is snow. She shakes off snow, stamping her feet and rubbing her hands.*)

LINDY. M-m-m, 's awful col'. Ah's mos' friz.

AUNT M. I don't wonder. Where you been in all this snow? First you know, you'll be sick.

LINDY. Jes' out sweep'n'. Ah laks it. 'Tain't go'n' make dis chile sick. Ah ain't no Mis' Poplin.

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AUNT M. She ain't Mis' Poplin now, I guess, since she married Josiah Tizzard.

LINDY. "Mr. Tizzard likes the gizzard ——"

AUNT M. Lindy Jane!

LINDY. He! He! "Wondah 'f he out 'n all de blizzard."

MARTIN. I declare, Lindy Jane's getting to be a poet.
(*Laughs.*) Give us another verse, Lindy Jane.

(*He has come down.*)

AUNT M. I should think you'd better scold her for making fun of folks, instead of encouraging her in it. (*To LINDY.*) You'd better get the broom and dust-pan and clean up that snow.

LINDY. Yass'm. (L.) "The wind she blew, 'n' the snow she snew ——"

AUNT M. You hurry.

LINDY. Yass'm. "An' Lindy Jane, away she flew ——"

(*Laughs merrily and runs off L.*)

AUNT M. Isn't she a case? I d' know what's got into her. (*The singing off R. has stopped.*) There, she's stopped singing. I wish Len 'd come over.

MARTIN. Still think there's hope for Len, do you?

AUNT M. Yes, I do. At any rate, I hope so. I believe 'twas him she really loved, all the time. (*There is a knock on D. F.*) There's somebody knocking. See who 'tis, Martin.

(*MARTIN goes and opens door. There is a rush of wind and a whirl of snow, as JOSIAH and MRS. P., very much wrapped up and covered with snow, hurry in. She has his arm and appears solicitous of his comfort. AUNT M. rises and goes up to them.*)

MRS. P. Here we be.

AUNT M. Well, I declare, you must be crazy. (*Goes and looks out of window.*) Why, it's snowing like everything.

MRS. P. Yes, I know 'tis. But Josiah would come. Said we must come 'n' tell you about our trip. (*She is helping him off with tippet, coat, etc.*) Dear me, Josiah, I hope you ain't caught cold. You know your rheumatiz ——

JOSIAH. 'Tain't goin' t' hurt me none; don't you fret.

HOME TIES

MARTIN. When did you get back?

MRS. P. Vestiddy. We had a grand time. Was in New York three days, 'n' seen all the sights. On the go the hull time.

(Enter LINDY, L., with broom and dust-pan. She looks at them, giggling, as she starts to sweep up snow.)

JOSIAH. How do, Lindy Jane?

LINDY. How do, Mistah Poplin?

MRS. P. What's that? Huh, I guess he ain't changed his name, has he?

LINDY. T'ought yo'-all's mah'ied.

MRS. P. We be. But it's me that ain't Mis' Poplin, you little goose.

LINDY. Oh! dat's it. He! he!

(She has finished sweeping; now takes things off L., giggling.)

MRS. P. She ain't got any too much sense, has she? (She places JOSIAH in a chair, R. C., fussing over him.) The idee o' callin' you "Mr. Poplin," Josiah.

JOSIAH. Guess she thought mebbe you's the boss.

MRS. P. Now, Josiah! He don't mean anything, Miss Winn. He has his own way in everything.

(She sits by JOSIAH, R. C. MARTIN is R., AUNT M., L.)

MARTIN. He certainly had his own way in winning you, Mrs. Poplin—excuse me, I mean Tizzard.

JOSIAH. That's once, 'f I never have it ag'in.

AUNT M. Nothing like perseverance, is there, Josiah?

MRS. P. Perseverance? Makin' a nuisance of y'rself, I call it. My land, I had t' marry him t' git red of him. He jest pestered me till I took him.

JOSIAH. She meant t' take me the hull time. Guess I knew.

MRS. P. Huh! You needn't flatter y'rself. Wal, anyhow, I'm took, so I might's well make the best of it.

AUNT M. So to speak, after having everything else, you thought you'd have a husband?

MRS. P. Yes, and I declare, I don't have time t' think of all my other ailments. It's him, now, I'm worryin' about.

JOSIAH. Yes, she's transferred her "symptoms" t' me.

MRS. P. Wal, he ain't very well, Josiah ain't, 'n' I have t' take good care of him. I'm so afraid he's caught cold, comin' out in all this snow, but he would come. Do you think you hev, Josiah?

JOSIAH. No, I ain't. Wish you'd let up on me bein' sick.

MRS. P. Land, you needn't snap me up b'fore folks, 'n' us jest married. If you're sorry you took me —

(*Begins to snivel.*)

JOSIAH. I ain't sorry. Guess it took me long enough git-t'n' y', t' be sorry this quick.

MRS. P. (*boo-hooing*). Yes, my money ain't all gone yet.

JOSIAH. She's always flinging that out.

MARTIN. Money? Hope you catch it, Josiah.

JOSIAH. I s'pose I'll never hear the last of it.

MRS. P. But you'll see the last of it, if it keeps goin' at the rate it has. (*To MARTIN.*) I paid all the 'xpenses of our trip, 'n' it cost somethin' awful.

AUNT M. I suppose you saw everything worth seeing, didn't you?

JOSIAH. I reckon we did. We went —

MRS. P. (*instantly brightening up and interrupting him*). Yes, we went everywhere 'n' took it all in. I wish you could see some of the things we did, Miss Winn. (*She talks to AUNT M., while JOSIAH turns to MARTIN, and they carry on the conversation intermittently, JOSIAH never being able to complete a sentence.*) They've got railroads that run up in the air and under the ground, 'n' some of the buildin's are s' high 't, I declare, I don't believe that Tower of Babel 't tells about in Script're would 'a' be'n half way to the top. They put y' inside of a little room about the size of one of our clothes-presses, 'n' the first y' know they scoot y' up till y' think they're never goin' t' stop, 'n' there y' are. I declare, I thought sometime 't we was goin' t' pay a visit to the man in the moon.

JOSIAH (*to MARTIN*). Say, ever be'n t' one of them shows where all the girls come out 'n' do the skirt dance without the skirts, and where —

MRS. P. (*to AUNT M.*). Yes, what d' you think?—Josiah would go to one o' them scand'lous performances. I told him if they found it out t' home here, we'd git

"churched." But, land, he was like a colt let loose. Wa'n't no holdin' him, once he got started.

JOSIAH. When they fust begun t' come out, I thought they'd f'rgot t' put on their clothes, but b' gosh, the hull durn caboodle of 'em was dressed the same way —

MRS. P. (*turning to JOSIAH, reprovngly*). "Undressed," I call it. Josiah Tizzard, ain't you got nothin' but them brazen things t' talk about? (*To AUNT M. again.*) We went to the Eden Muzee place, where the folks 're all made o' wax. Kings 'n' queens 'n' all sort o' people standin' around as natural 's life, 'n' nothin' but dummies. Y' ought t' seen Josiah. I caught him try t' flirt with a wax lady sett'n' on a bench.

JOSIAH. You needn't say nothin'. (*To MARTIN.*) She asked a wax p'liceman —

MRS. P. I knew he was wax the hull time. I jest done that t' give you somethin' t' crow about. (*To AUNT M. again.*) I never knew Josiah was so green. He tried t' put a letter in one o' them fire-alarm boxes.

JOSIAH (*to MARTIN*). What d' you think Mari' done? Thought I looked sick, so she see a sign up "Manicure," 'n' went in t' git me some medicine. Thought it meant a place t' cure sick men —

MRS. P. Why, the—i-dee! I didn't, neither. I jest thought mebbe they could tell me where t' find a drug store. Josiah really ain't well, Mis' Winn. His heart's weak, 'n' I think he has sym'toms — (*Organ or piano music heard again, off R.*) Why, there's music. Is it Ruth playin'?

AUNT M. Yes.

MRS. P. Wal, I'm glad t' hear it. Looks like she was gitt'n' over her disappointment about that Mr. Vincent. Terrible the way he shook her, ain't it? But I wa'n't s'prised a mite. You can't depend on them city folks. I guess Ruth's jest 's well off, though—'r better. I al'ays kind o' wondered, Mr. Winn, 't you let her go away t' school, 'n' all like that, after what happened. Of course, you never come right out 'n' told what did happen, but folks was led to s'spect things. I think it's terrible the way folks will talk 'n' try t' fig're out other folks' business. For my part, I don't believe in meddlin' 'n' pryin' int' things that don't concern me—that ain't me—but as for some—wal, they ain't satisfied

without they know all that's goin' on. (*During this speech, MARTIN has risen and gone up R.; AUNT M. exits L., and JOSIAH falls asleep, nodding. By the time she has concluded, MARTIN also exits, R., and when she pauses she looks around and sees only JOSIAH. She jumps up, shakes him.*) Josiah,—for the land's sake, wake up! Ain't you ashamed o' y'rself, goin' t' sleep visitin' at the neighbors? I d' know what Mr. and Miss Winn 'll think. They're both gone. I wonder where they went. (*The music off R. has stopped.*) I don't call it very polite. I guess we'll go.

(*She hustles him about and prepares to get their things.*)

JOSIAH. I d' want t' go. Jest come.

MRS. P. Wal, I guess you will,—treatin' us this way. I guess I know when I'm wanted, 'n' when I know I ain't, I don't stay long—it ain't me —

(*LINDY pokes head in L.*)

LINDY. Miss Winn says come out 'n' she'll give you a cup o' tea. (*Disappears.*)

MRS. P. Oh,—tea! Huh, I guess after—wal, I d' know but we will, 'cause I really think you need it, Josiah. It'll warm you up f'r the walk home.

JOSIAH. Tea? Wal, I s'pose it's better 'n nothin'. (*She is attempting to aid him, as they go L., but he shakes her off impatiently.*) Let me alone, Mari'; I ain't sick.

(*Enter RUTH, R.*)

RUTH. Good-evening, Mr. and Mrs. Tizzard. Let me congratulate the bride and groom.

(*She goes and shakes hands with them.*)

JOSIAH. Thanks. Same to you.

MRS. P. Josiah,—she ain't married.

JOSIAH. I mean, "many of 'em."

MRS. P. Wal, if you ain't —

RUTH. Never mind, Mrs. Poplin, I know what he means.

MRS. P. "Poplin"? Land, I guess you're mixed, too.

JOSIAH. "Poplin!" No,—"Tizzard."

(*Exit, L.*)

HOME TIES

RUTH. Why,—of course. Forgive me. Just home from your tour, I hear.

MRS. P. Yes. Was t' New York. Ain't that a grand place? You was there, 'n' of course you know. Thought one spell you'd go there t' live, didn't y'? But I hear that's all off. Don't you ever hear from that Mr. Vincent any more?

RUTH. Why—yes, I have had several letters from him.

MRS. P. Very lately?

RUTH. N-not just—no, not very lately. (*She is embarrassed; tries to change the subject, going L.*) Where is Aunt Melissa? I thought she was here.

MRS. P. (*she has been L.; now gets between RUTH and the door, so that RUTH is compelled to remain*). No, she went out in the kitchen. Lindy Jane says she's makin' us some tea. Seems t' me you ain't lookin' quite s' well—kind o' pindlin'. Wal, it ain't t' be wondered at. I s'pose you been worryin' about him, but I wouldn't. He ain't worth it, if he's shook you the way I hear he has —

RUTH. Mrs. Tizzard—I—please don't —

MRS. P. Oh! hurts, does it? Excuse me. I didn't mean anything. I wouldn't hurt y'r feelin's for the world, 'r have you think I was tryin' t' find out things. No, indeed,—that ain't me. But sometimes the truth hurts, and the medicine that's best for us ain't al'ays the pleasantest t' take. (*Enter MARTIN, R.*) Now, if I was you, I wouldn't give him another thought. The truth is—'r seems t' be—t he's got tired o' y', and shook y' for another, so —

MARTIN (*coming forward*; MRS. P., *seeing him, pauses, a bit taken aback*). Ruth, dear.

MRS. P. Oh, it's you, Mr. Winn? I was jest tellin' Ruth it seems t' me she ain't lookin' very well. I shouldn't be s'prised if she needs some medicine. If y' do, Ruth, I've got a circular about a new kind, 'n' judgin' from y'r looks 'n' all, it seems t' describe your sym't'ms. It's called—there, I f'rgit the name, but I kept the circular.

RUTH. Thank you, Mrs. Tizzard, but I am quite well. I don't need any medicine.

MRS. P. Glad if y' don't, but y' look's if y' did. Wal, I must go out in the kitchen. Miss Winn's makin' some

tea. I hope y' don't think I was interferin', 'cause that ain't me.

(Exit, L.)

MARTIN. You mustn't mind what she says, Ruthie dear; she's simply a gossip, with nothing to do but talk.

RUTH. I know, father; but still it—hurts—to know that people are talking about me, and saying that I have been “thrown over.”

MARTIN. Is that what hurts the worst, Ruth,—what people say?

RUTH. Y-yes, I think it is. Somehow, I—I don't quite understand it—but I don't seem to care so much as I did—as much as it seems I ought to—about—about—him.

MARTIN. I'm glad of that, dear. It is all for the best. He is not our kind—or we are not his—and it is all for the best. You have suffered, and it may not all be over yet, but I thank heaven you have been spared something that might be a thousand times worse.

RUTH. Perhaps,—I don't know —

MARTIN. How thankful I am that you are still with us, in the shelter of home, with the home ties still unbroken, and that you are still my own dear little girl, with a sad heart, perhaps, but with those who really love you and will do all in their power to make you happy again.

(Takes her in his arms, kissing her.)

RUTH. But I am not so unhappy, father. No, sad as I feel, and hard as it has been to think that one I loved is not all I thought him to be—I—somehow, I don't seem to care—not so much as I thought I should. It is all like a dream, and I still have you,—you, and others whose love will never fail me.

MARTIN. What—what about Len Everett, Ruth? Is there hope for him?

RUTH. Len—Len Everett? Why, he doesn't care anything about me, now. How could he, after I—after all that has happened? He went away, and —

MARTIN. Yes, I know. But he has come back, Ruth. He came last night, and I have seen him. He does care for you, Ruth.

RUTH. He—he told you so?

MARTIN. Yes, Ruth, he told me, and — *(There is a*

HOME TIES

knock on D. F.) Oh,—there's somebody knocking.
I'll see who it is. (*Goes up.*) Perhaps it's Len, now.
RUTH. Then I will go and—and have a cup of tea. I —

(*Exit, L.*)

(MARTIN *opens door, admitting LEN.*)

MARTIN. Well, well,—speaking of angels! How are you, Len? Come in.

LEN. (*entering, brushing off snow*). Thanks, Mr. Winn. Quite a snow-storm, isn't it?

MARTIN. Seems to be. (*Opens the door a crack and glances out.*) Well, I should say it was. Doesn't seem to hinder folks coming out, though. Mr. and Mrs. Tizzard are here, too. Here, let me have your coat.

LEN. No, thanks, I'll lay it over here. It's kind of wet. (*Lays coat and hat on chair, up R.*) So the bride and groom are here, eh? I heard they were back from their "tower," as Josiah calls it. What's the latest symptoms with the Mrs.?

MARTIN. "Husbanitis," I guess. She's transferred her ailments to him; spends most of her time trying to make him think he's sick. (*They have come down.*) Sit down, Len. We'll go out in the kitchen in a minute. The folks are out there. (LEN. *sits R.*, MARTIN, C.) It's good for sore eyes to see you. You've been terribly distant of late.

LEN. Have I? I didn't mean to be. Only,—well, Mr. Winn, I guess you know how I felt. Sort of a delicate matter with me. But I was over last night, as you know. And now I'm here again.

MARTIN. That's often, that is, after being gone two months. Didn't you like the West?

LEN. Can't say that I did. It's all right, but—well, I might as well be fair and square about it—I was homesick. Simply had to come back. You see, I'd never been away before for any length of time, nor so far, and—well, I always was a kind of a home boy, and when you wrote that you hadn't sold my new house yet——

MARTIN. Didn't try to sell it.

LEN. You didn't? I asked you to.

MARTIN. I know you did, but you didn't mean it. Been sorry if I had.

HOME TIES

LEN. I don't understand. I have no use for it.

MARTIN. Pshaw! How do you know you haven't?

LEN. (*rising*). Why, Mr. Winn, what do you mean?

MARTIN. Oh, nothing, only that it would be a shame to sell a nice new house like that for what you can get for it now. Be worth more in a few years. (*Rises, going L.*) Coming to have a cup of tea? It seems they're having a sort of tea party out in the other room.

LEN. Thanks, I'm not very strong for tea, but I wouldn't mind going in and saying how-d'-do to the folks. By the way, I stopped in the post-office, and thought I might as well bring your mail along.

(*Goes up R., gets overcoat, takes a newspaper and a good-sized letter, stamped and addressed, from pocket.*)

MARTIN. Glad you did. (*Takes paper and letter.*) Much obliged. Oh, this letter's for Ruth. Guess I'll let you give it to her, yourself. I'll send her in.

(*Hands the letter back to LEN. and goes L.*)

LEN. (*who has taken the letter mechanically*). No—you take it. Here.

(*MARTIN smiles, refuses to take letter, and exits L.* LEN. stands a moment, looking after him, then at letter. There is a slight pause, then RUTH enters L. She seems somewhat embarrassed when she sees him, but shows pleasure.)

RUTH. Why, Len, how do you do? I am very glad to see you. (*They shake hands.*)

LEN. Thank you, Ruth. I am well, and—glad to see you, too. It's quite a while, isn't it?

RUTH. Yes. I heard you were over last night. But I guess you didn't want to see me—very much.

LEN. Oh,—I guess you know better than that. There never was the time I didn't want to see you—and never will be.

RUTH (*blushingly*). Thank you, Len. It's kind of you to say it, and I—I can say the same of you.

LEN. (*advancing a step toward her*). Can you, Ruth?

RUTH. Why, yes, of course. (*Starts L.*) I'll get you a cup of tea.

HOME TIES

LEN. No, don't—please. I don't want any tea. I—oh, I almost forgot. I have a letter for you.

(Hands her the letter.)

RUTH. Thank you. *(Glances at it, starting slightly.)* It's—it's from New York. *(He turns away. She looks at him almost pleadingly, as if about to speak, falters, then finally goes over to him, putting her hand on his arm.)* But it's not from—him—Len. He—he doesn't write to me any more. *(Glances up at him, shyly.)* And I don't care, Len,—I—I don't want—him—to.

LEN. Ruth—you—you mean?

(He advances a step toward her, with a look of joyful surprise and expectancy; she offers no resistance, and he seems about to take her in his arms when LINDY suddenly thrusts her head in L., and at the sound of her voice they turn from each other slightly, assuming a more matter-of-fact air.)

LINDY. Want some te-e-ea? *(Disappears.)*

RUTH. Why—yes, of course—tea;—I forgot. Will you have some, Len?

LEN. No. We weren't speaking of tea, Ruth. You were saying—it was about the letter—and —

(Enter MRS. P., L., quickly, again interrupting them.)

MRS. P. Wal, I declare, here's Len Everett—with Ruth. *(Looks off L., and calls.)* Here's Len Everett.

(Enter AUNT M., L.)

AUNT M. Why, Len, how d' do? I'm glad to see you. Thought you was never coming over.

(Goes and shakes hands with him.)

LEN. Thanks, Miss Winn. I'm glad to see you, too, and to be home again. I have found out that there's no place like home.

MRS. P. Ain't you goin' t' shake hands with me, too, Len? *(Goes up to him.)*

LEN. *(taking her hand).* Why, of course I am, Mrs.—er —Tizzard.

HOME TIES

MRS. P. Yes, that's it.

LEN. And my sincere congratulations. Where's the happy bridegroom?

(Enter JOSIAH, L., followed by MARTIN.)

MRS. P. Here he is. Here's Len Everett, Josiah.

JOSIAH. How d' do, Len?

LEN. (as they shake hands). Well, thank you, Josiah, and hope I see you the same.

JOSIAH. Yes, thank y'—

MRS. P. He ain't, s' very. If he didn't keep doct'rin'—

JOSIAH. Huh! ain't nothin' ails me but too much coddlin', 'n' too many pesky "sym't'ms."

MRS. P. (sniveling). Yes, that's all the thanks I git f'r takin' sech good care of him, 'n' payin' all the doctor's bills.

JOSIAH. Y' needn't bring that up.

MRS. P. Wal, it's true. Boo-hoo!

(She goes up R., followed by RUTH, who pretends to comfort her. MARTIN stands L., looking on, amused; LEN. and JOSIAH are C., AUNT M., R. C.)

LEN. So you're married, Josiah? Congratulations.

JOSIAH. Thanks. Same t' you, 'n' many of 'em.

AUNT M. Land, he isn't married—yet.

JOSIAH. "Yet"—he! he! Thinkin' of it? Eh, Len?

LEN. M'm—well, I don't know, Josiah. There's always hope, you know.

JOSIAH. Sure. That's how I looked at it, 'n' finally I got her.

MARTIN. You're a first-rate example in perseverance, Josiah. I guess Mrs. Poplin can testify to that.

MRS. P. "Poplin" agin.

MARTIN. Oh, excuse me—Tizzard.

(Enter LINDY, L.)

AUNT M. Lindy, is the fire burning in the other room?

LINDY. Reckon 'tis, 'm. Ah'll go 'n' see. (Crosses to R.)

AUNT M. You build it up good, 'cause we're all coming in there. (To the others.) Thought maybe we'd have a little music. I'll play on the organ, and we'll all sing.

HOME TIES

MARTIN (*crossing to R.*). Good. Supposing we do.

(*Exit* LINDY, R.)

AUNT M. (R.). Come on, then. I guess it's warm in there.

(*They all go R., except LEN., who remains C., and RUTH, who is up R.*)

JOSIAH. Comin', Mari'?

MRS. P. (*joining him*). Yes; but I hope it ain't chilly in there, Josiah. You know, your rheumatiz —

JOSIAH. I guess we'll resk it. Come along.

(*He ushers her off R. She looks back, sentimentally, first at LEN., then at RUTH, smiling knowingly. They are followed by AUNT M. and MARTIN, who nods at LEN. encouragingly. RUTH stands up R., looking out of window, not noticing the others. There is a pause, during which LEN. looks at RUTH, starts up, as if about to speak, hesitates, then finally starts, goes toward her. Just as he is about to speak, LINDY puts head in R.*)

LINDY. Come on 'n' sing. (*Disappears.*)

(*The organ off R. begins softly to play "Home, Sweet Home." RUTH, who previously had laid the letter on table, has taken it up and now mechanically tears open the envelope. She is R., by table; LEN. C. He watches her, as she takes from the envelope another, which is not sealed, glancing at it with a show of surprise. She opens the other envelope, taking out an invitation; looks at it, in a half-dazed manner, as its significance slowly dawns upon her, leaning against table.*)

LEN. Ruth—what —

(*She holds out the paper to him, with her head partly turned the other way. He takes it, reading, with some bewilderment.*)

RUTH. Read it—aloud.

LEN. (*reading*). "Mr. and Mrs. Edward Beecher Wayne announce the marriage of their daughter, Alma Louise, to—Harold—Cranston—Vincent—" (*He pauses,*

HOME TIES

looking at RUTH, who stands with averted face.)
Ruth! *(She does not reply, and there is a moment's silence, except for the music off R., voices now being heard softly singing "Home, Sweet Home.")* LEN. *goes up by window, looking out. After a pause, he turns, looks at RUTH, who has her back to him, then speaks.)*
Ruth,—Ruth—do you care—so—so very much?

RUTH *(looking at him)*. No, Len. I—I don't think I ever did—really.

LEN. *(pausing, with a look half fear, half hope; then taking a step toward her, holding out his hand)*. Ruth—see! *(Glances out of window.)*

RUTH *(going up, letting him take her hand. He leads her to window)*. Yes, Len.

LEN. Look—over there. It has stopped snowing, and I can see it in the moonlight.

RUTH. What, Len?—see what?

LEN. My house. Shall it be—can it be—our ——

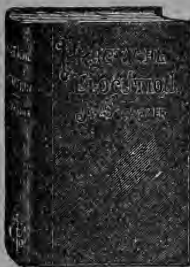
(He hesitates, looking at her with great tenderness.)

RUTH *(going close to him)*. Yes, Len, our—"Home, Sweet Home."

(His arm steals about her, and he draws her to him, kissing her, and they stand looking out of window. The singing continues until after the curtain falls.)

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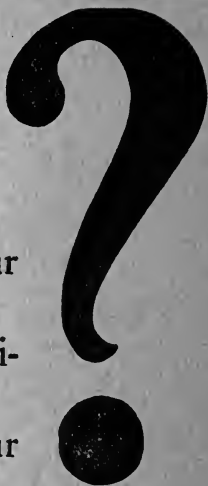
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